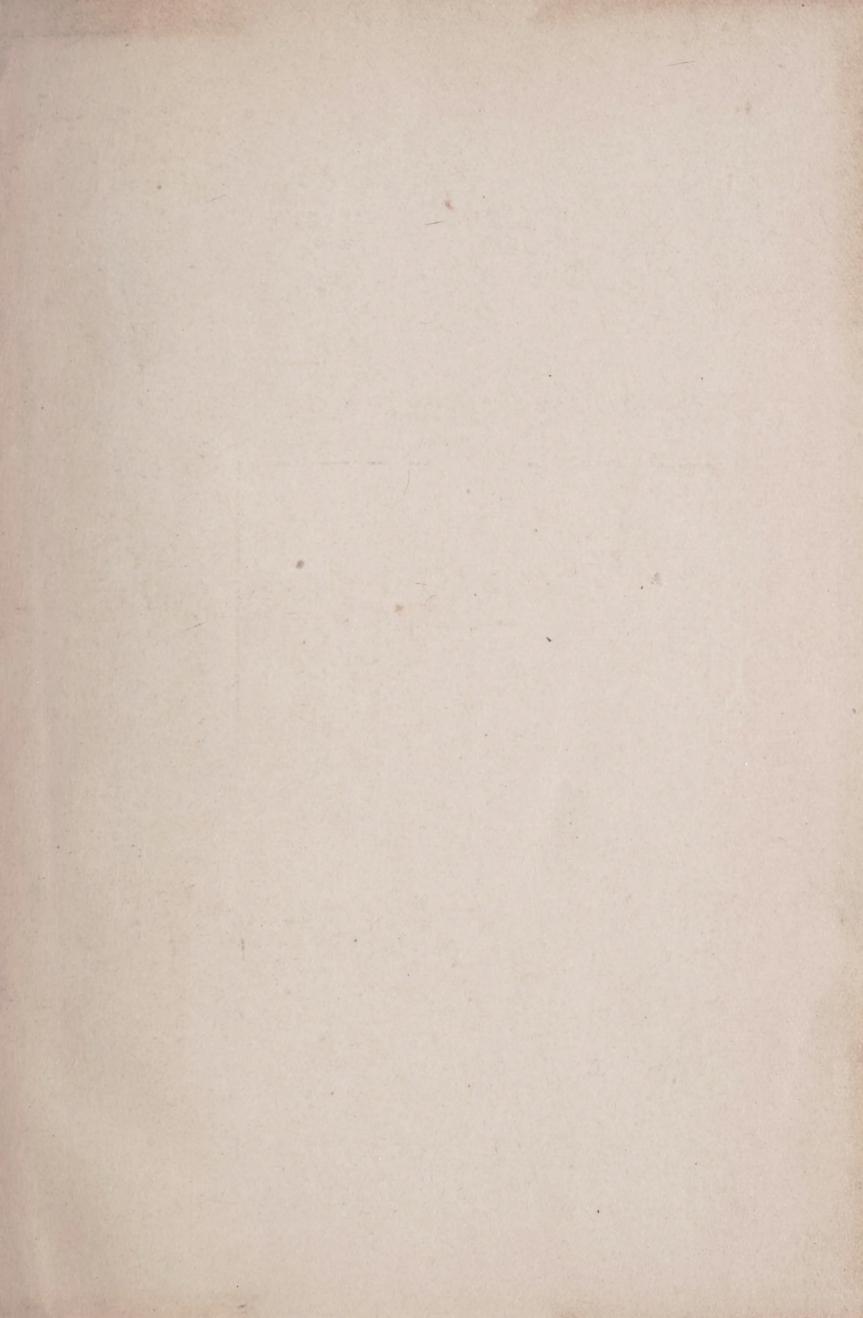
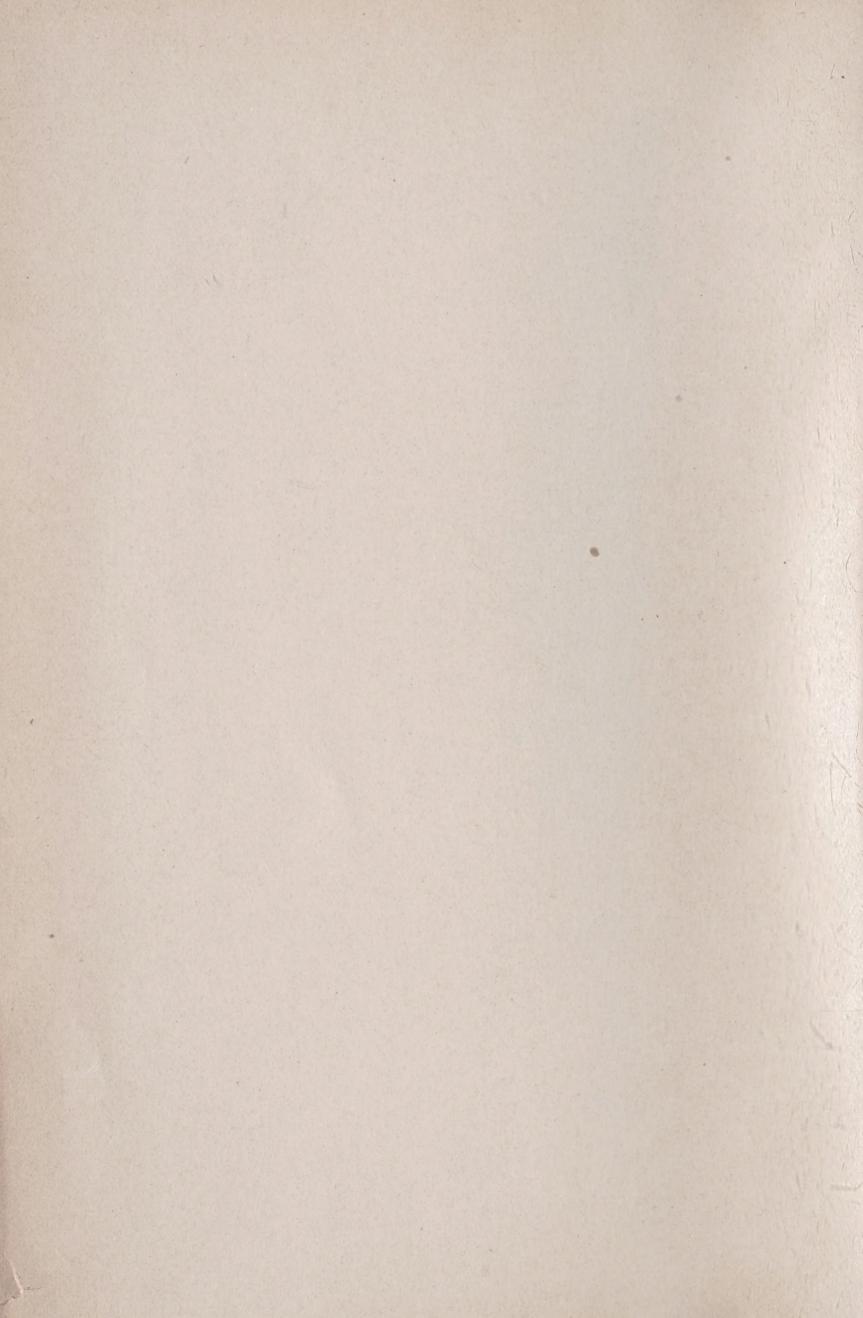
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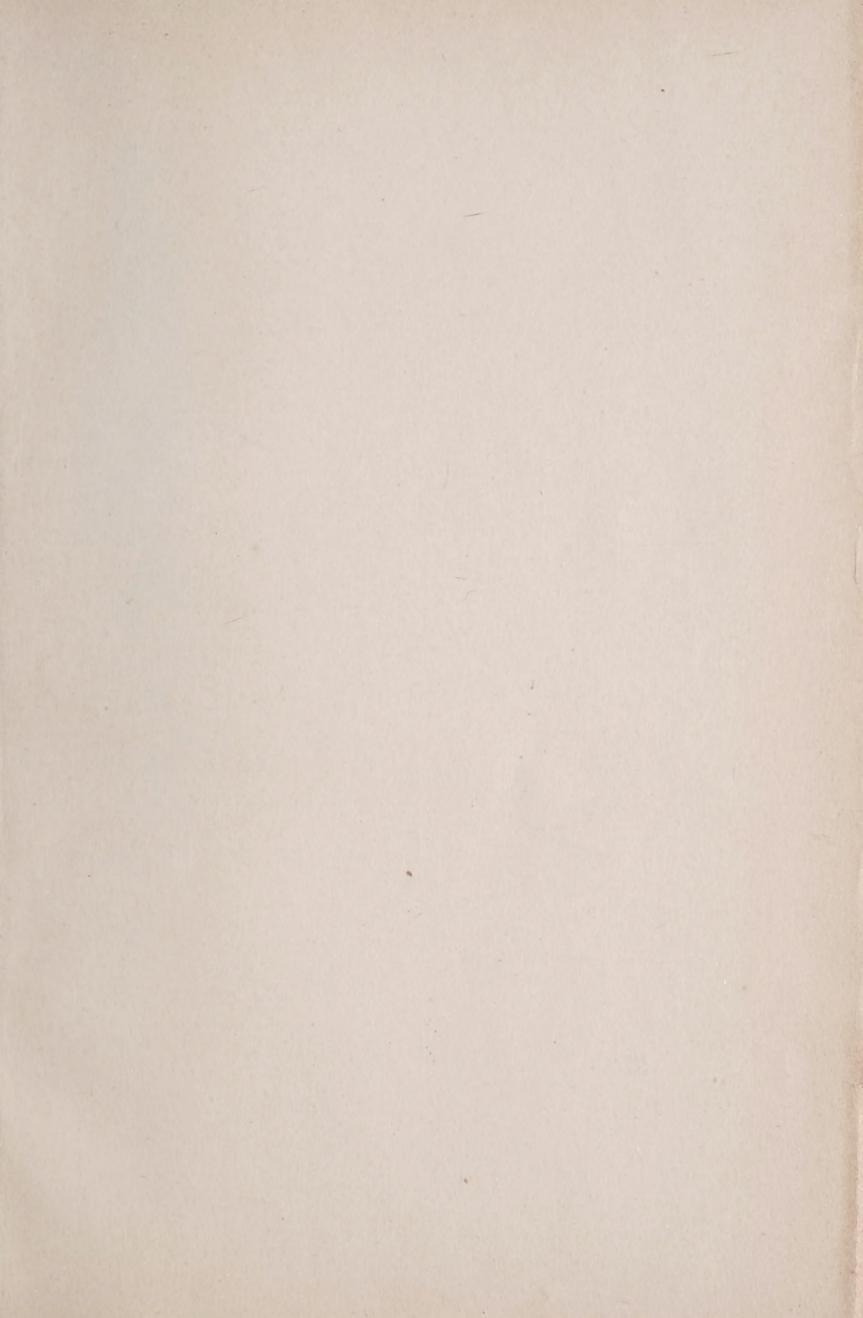
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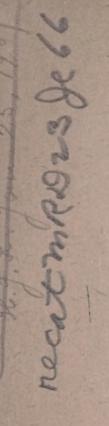
PUBLISHERS.

THE POPULAR SERIES: ISSUED MONTHLY. SUBSCRIPTION PRICE, THREE DOLLARS PER ANNUM. NO. 18,
JANUARY 7, 1892. ENTERED AT THE NEW YORK, N. Y., POST OFFICE AS SECOND CLASS MAIL MATTER,

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THE YOUNG CASTAWAYS.

CHAPTER I.

A MYSTERIOUS YOUNG COUPLE.



T the dead of a winter's night, the brig *Emerald*, from New Orleans, was caught in a sudden and blinding snow-squall, while attempting Boston harbor, and dashed in pieces upon one of the bleak shores to the northward of that port.

It was at first believed that every soul on board the ill-fated vessel had perished. A report to this effect

was even telegraphed to the metropolis, and thence transmitted throughout the country to the newspapers. But this was a mistake.

The morning succeeding the disaster, it was found that one Dickerill, an old fisherman residing near the scene, had saved a couple of children from the wreck—

a boy and a girl, who were judged to be twins, and to have entered their third year. Dickerill had found them lashed to a fragment of one of the brig's boats, unconscious, nearly drowned—in the last stages of exhaustion, in fact—and he and Mrs. Dickerill "had had all the trouble in the world to bring 'em to," he said, which busy cares accounted for the ignorance concerning the rescue in which he had been compelled for some hours to leave his neighbors.

The discovery that two such diminutive personages had been saved, when so many strong men had perished, produced a great sensation along the whole coast.

How had it happened?

Who were the young couple? Whence had they come and whither were they going? What were their names, parentage, and history?

These questions were unanswerable. And because they were unanswerable, speculation was all the more busy with them.

The agent of the Boston consignee, who arrived upon the ground during the forenoon, brought lists of the passengers and crew, which had been forwarded in due course of mail from New Orleans by the very careful owners, but no families with children figured upon either of these records. The lost skipper had been an unmarried man. The brig had carried a stewardess and a couple of female servants—these latter in the service of a wealthy and well-known Creole family—but not the least mention of children was forthcoming. It was conjectured that the couple might have been picked up at sea, or that they had been brought aboard of the brig just as she was leaving port, and it was further supposed that the vessel's log might have thrown some light upon them, but the log had been

lost, and so they found themselves enveloped in a cloud of impenetrable mystery.

Who were they, therefore? Everybody asked the question, and everybody gave speculations for answers.

Perhaps a stranger who made a flying visit from Boston to the spot during the afternoon could have thrown some light on the matter, for he was very critical in his contemplation of the children, and very searching in his questions respecting them, demanding the particulars of their rescue, the facts respecting their rescuer, the measures that would probably be taken concerning them, and noting especially the various surmises which took the place of information in regard to them. But this stranger, on being in turn questioned, declared that he was simply a reporter for a daily journal of the metropolis, and soon after took an abrupt departure.

A portion of the brig's cargo was saved during the next few days, and such of her dead passengers and sailors as were washed ashore were duly buried, but nothing arrived to throw any light upon the two children. That their parents had been aboard the brig was theorized as a matter of course, but this theory received a rude shock when the owners telegraphed from New Orleans that none of the families lost in the brig had been blessed with any such children.

And thus the mystery enveloping the young couple became darker than ever.

"We don't even know what their names are," said Dickerill, in a general audience of his neighbors, a couple of weeks after the disaster.

"Nor even if they have been baptized," returned Mr. Gilbert, the pastor of the solitary little church at the nearest four-corners. "And for this reason we shall

have to name them. Let me have your views, friends. What shall we call them?"

"Jared and Jemimy—after my uncle and aunt," suggested a prominent person in the crowd, a Mr. Spareman, who occupied one of the finest farms in the neighborhood.

"Jared and Jemimy what?" asked Mrs. Spareman, quickly, as she turned away from the children and drew her arms akimbo. "You don't mean to call them castaways after us, Joshua?"

"No, Jerushy," replied Spareman. "As they came from the sea, let'em be called Seaborn—Jared and Jemimy Seaborn."

Mr. Gilbert shook his head slowly.

"I don't like to call them after anybody, Mr. Spareman," he said. "The names we are about to bestow are merely provisional, of course—merely for use until their real names are discovered. I like Seaborn well enough, but instead of the names of your uncle and aunt, Mr. Spareman, I would suggest Archibald and Elgie, after nobody in particular, and merely for use until the real names of the children are discovered."

The proposal of the reverend gentleman was at once adopted, and the children were duly baptized as Archibald and Elgie Seaborn.

"The boy seems to have been dressed better than the gal," observed a curious old matron present. "I don't believe they are brother and sister."

"Oh, yes, they are, Nancy," responded another of the town's gossips. "I should know 'em anywheres to be twins—they have such a family resemblance."

"And especially in their hair and eyes," chimed in a third wondering matron. "As to the better clothes on the boy, that is all nonsense. The clothes are no better, and it wouldn't signify the least thing if they were, considering."

"You've all seen the locket and chain on the gal's neck, I suppose," exclaimed Mrs. Spareman, who had been busying herself again with the children. "P'r'aps that locket will tell some of you suthin!"

But it didn't. Not so much as an initial could be found upon it.

"The bauble may restore the child to her kindred some day," suggested the clergyman. "That is the most we can hope for, as her parents doubtless perished in the wreck. In the meantime, we must provide for the poor things. Mrs. Dickerill does not feel able to retain charge of them longer. Who will be foremost in this matter?"

A dead silence followed the question.

"I mean for the present, of course," added the minister, "and until their friends are heard from, or until some definite action can be taken in the premises!"

The ominous silence continued. Nobody seemed in a hurry to take charge of the unknown waifs who had been so singularly thrust upon them.

"What! has nobody pity upon these poor creatures?" demanded Mr. Gilbert, as he looked around reproachfully upon his parishioners. "Why can't you take charge of them, brother Spareman?"

Mr. Spareman flushed and moved uneasily, his eyes seeking the gaze of his wife.

"I don't know why you should ask me to burden myself with 'em," he answered, "any sooner than you'd ask anybody else."

"I wouldn't take charge of 'em for anything!" declared Mrs. Spareman, flatly.

"And why not, pray?" asked the parson. "You have no children of your own, you know."

Mrs. Spareman flushed angrily.

"Well, if I have no children of my own," she returned, "it isn't for you to twit me about it, Parson Gilbert, for you have none yourself!"

The clergyman heaved a deep sigh.

"Will no good soul take charge of these poor children?" the minister continued.

Still that profound silence.

"Be it so," added Mr. Gilbert, sadly. "I will take charge of them myself."

He did so.

But Mrs. Gilbert was sickly and none too self-sacrificing, and when it became probable that no inquiry was being made for the children by rich friends or relatives—when repeated answers came from the owners of the lost brig that no clue to the mystery of the waifs could be obtained from any quarter—she grew weary with her labors, and shamed and entreated one of her neighbors into giving her a resting-spell. From the house of this neighbor the unfortunate children passed through several houses in rapid succession, including the houses of Mr. and Mrs. Spareman; but this last exceptional favor was naturally a presage of misfortune, and from the house of the Sparemans the two little waifs were removed to the poor-house.

"The poor-house is really the place for 'em, after all, now that it is clear no one will ever come for 'em," said Mrs. Spareman. "It's only right that the care and trouble of them young uns should be divided among the whole town."

The remark served as a sort of funeral oration over the children. From that hour forward they lived forgotten and unnoticed. In the providence of God, however, it matters little where and how the early years of any human being are accomplished, if the real stuff is in him. So it proved in the case of our hero and heroine. They grew and waxed strong—mentally, morally and physically. Not that they were in a good school for any of these developments, but merely that the mercy of Heaven, as shown in their preservation from the waves, continued to rest upon them.

When they had reached their eighth year, as near as could be calculated, they were as bright and sweet and lovable as any two children that ever existed.

But an evil hour had sounded for them.

"This 'ere boy must be bound out to a trade," decided Mr. Spareman, who had become one of the selectmen of his town, "and that there gal must find a home with a good lady where she can be brought up properly. Neither of 'em must be a charge to the town no longer."

The fates had spoken! The evening of the day on which that decision was reached, found the two children miles from each other.

What agonies that first separation caused them! The temporary interest which had been felt in them at their first advent into the town was revived by their distress upon this occasion.

"Poor things!" said several persons.

And then all was said.

Bound out to a butcher, who worked him like a slave, Arty Seaborn—as everybody called him—entered upon a period of his career that was truly lamentable. The "trade" he was learning was not merely a horror and an abomination to him, but his employer was one of those brutal, avaricious task-masters, who regard their apprentices as having no rights they are bound to

respect. The only schooling allowed Arty was a few weeks in midwinter, and for even this favor he was obliged to make amends by long hours of toil every morning and evening. His lot was scarcely better than that of a Hebrew under the task-masters of Egypt.

But the situation of Elgie was not a bit better than that of her supposed brother. From one task-mistress to another, she had soon drifted into the hands of Mrs. Spareman, who had at last been blessed with a family, and who had promptly reached a conclusion that Elgie would be very handy in taking care of the Spareman progeny. To lug these human cubs about the house all the day long seemed to Mrs. Spareman the most natural of duties for the poor girl, and hardly an hour passed in which she was not subjected to coarse abuse from the tongue of her task-mistress, not to mention the blows and cuffs which were so frequently showered upon her.

A couple of years had thus been passed in separate spheres by our hero and heroine, when a strange rumor excited the dreary hamlet into which they had been cast.

It was said that an inquiry had been made for the young couple; that a dark-faced man had come from afar to make inquiries about the loss of the *Emerald*; that this stranger had been seen walking in a lonely spot with Mr. Spareman, at a late hour of the night, and conversing earnestly with him; and that the dark-faced visitor had then vanished as mysteriously as he had come.

Interrogated about this rumor, Mr. Spareman said it was all a lie, and grew so angry at all pressure of the subject that his denials were soon generally accepted, and nothing more was said of the rumored visit.

The older the young couple grew the keener became

their dissatisfaction with their lot, and their sense of the degradation and cruelty to which they were subjected, and before Arty had entered his thirteenth year, he had arrived at the great door of deliverance which so naturally presents itself to a young lad of spirit beset by a great trouble.

He resolved to run away.

Within a few days after reaching this resolve, the boy's plans were so well matured that he fixed the evening and hour in which he would turn his back upon his employer forever.

He was off punctually at the moment appointed, setting out at an hour when he was supposed to be asleep in his loft at the butcher's.

How naturally his steps turned toward Elgie!

Until now he had kept his resolution from her, but he could not go forth into the great world without bidding her farewell.

In due course he was under the gable window which lighted her narrow apartment and called her name softly. He was sure she would be awake, and he was not mistaken. Her curly head soon appeared at the window, and her wondering eyes looked down upon him.

"Come down here, Elgie," he called.

"I do not know as I can," she faltered.

"You must come!"

The girl disappeared from the window, and a long interval of silent anxiety followed, but at last she emerged from the house unnoticed. A thrill shook Arty as he received her in his arms and noticed how much she had changed during the few days in which he had been revolving his project and in which he had remained away from her. Her face was pale and thin, her eyes unnaturally large and restless. She seemed almost like a spirit.

"I expected you," she murmured, as she clung to him, panting and trembling.

"Expected me?" asked Arty, as he drew her away

from the house.

"Yes. I knew something terrible was about to happen! You have run away!"

The lad was not a little discountenanced by this

reception.

"It is true, Elgie!" he soon admitted. "I will stand

that sort of thing no longer!"

His eyes gleamed, and his face glowed with gloomy and unrestful courage, as he shook his clenched hand in the direction from which he had come.

"And where are you going?"

"God alone knows where, but far away from here—to Boston or New York, perhaps—and even further than that!"

She girl shuddered at the sweep of the youth's hand. It indicated that vast ocean which had already been so fatal to them.

"You mean to be a sailor?" she faltered.

"What else can I be?"

A few moments of silence succeeded—a silence broken only by the panting sobs of the couple—and then the arms of Elgie encircled Arty's neck more closely.

"Oh, take me with you!" she pleaded.

"Impossible!" returned Arty, standing up bravely to what he supposed to be a manly view of the situation. "How can I take a little girl like you with me? But I will make myself rich, Elgie, and then come for you!"

The girl burst into a violent fit of weeping. It was several minutes before she could control her voice, but she finally said, with forced calmness:

"If you leave me here, Arty, you will never see me

again. I am dying every minute I stay here—dying by inches. Feel my arms and look in my face."

Arty Seaborn realized only too clearly the truth of Elgie's declaration. His frame shook now like the leaves of an aspen. His eyes had a fixed and stony stare, as if he perceived a dreadful horror looming up before him.

"Oh, I know they are killing you," he whispered.

"But what can I do? Whither can I take you? We haven't a friend in the world."

"True, but perhaps we can find one. Oh, do not leave me here, Arty! They act as if they wanted me to die. Mr. Spareman gives me queer medicines. I overheard him tell Mrs. Spareman yesterday that he would obtain thousands of dollars if anything should happen to me."

Arty was dumb with horror. All his blood receded from his cheeks.

"Mr. Spareman must know who we are!" he breathed, excitedly. "There must be truth in that story of the midnight visitor. But where can I take you, Elgie?"

"Anywhere! anywhere! So long as it is away from this place! So long as I am with you, Arty!"

Looking down into her anguished eyes and kissing her tenderly, Arty stroked her soft hair a few moments in silence, and then whispered:

"Come, then! Bundle up warmly, and come!"



CHAPTER II.

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A BAD START IN THE WORLD.

With what wild joy and relief did Elgie return to her apartment!

Her baggage was as light as her preparations were brief. She paused in her room only long enough to put on her thickest shoes, and secure her cloak and bonnet, and a few trifles she especially valued. Then she assured herself by listening at the door of their bed-room, that Mr. and Mrs. Spareman were asleep.

"We ought to have something to eat," was the girl's thought. "I wonder if I can reach the pantry—and if there's anything to eat in it."

To think of food was to try to secure it. She had eaten scarcely a mouthful during the day, and she now realized only too well that she would not be able to maintain her strength for any length of time without suitable nourishment. To her surprise and joy, she found some cold meats and biscuits in the pantry, and lost no time in making a neat package of the best that came to her hand.

Thus equipped, she again stole from the house in silence, and hastened to the spot where the boy was waiting.

"You are fully decided to go with me, Elgie?" he asked gravely.

"Fully!"

"Then may you never regret it!"

"I never shall! With you by my side, Arty, any place in the world will be pleasant. We are not mere children now, Arty! We have had a great deal of experience, and will surely be able to get our own living!"

The boy heaved a deep sigh. He was old enough to comprehend the peril and difficulty of the path upon

which they were about to enter.

The girl trembled again.

"Surely, you don't wish me to stay here, Arty, after what I have told you?" she faltered.

"No, Elgie, that is impossible! I must certainly go and you must as certainly go with me! We must run away together! Come."

Drawing her trembling arm within his own, he led her away at a smart pace, with many a feverish glance, behind him. Not another word passed between them until they reached the great shore-road leading to the metropolis.

"All continues still behind us," then said Arty. "But they will pursue us if they miss us!"

"Yes, and they may miss us at any moment!" returned Elgie. "Mrs. Spareman calls me up almost every night to look after her worrying children. What if she should be calling me now!"

The mere thought was a terror, and the couple sped on their way rapidly. The hour was already so late that not a soul save themselves seemed stirring. Only an occasional gleam of light was visible in the great solitude around them.

Their first alarm was at a farm house, where a formidable dog placed himself in their path and barked at them furiously. But the boy promptly planted a stone in the dog's side that sent him away howling, and the

couple passed on their way so swiftly that their identity was not discovered.

Their next alarm was occasioned by the approach of a wagon, but they hid themselves by the roadside until it had passed, and then trudged on as resolutely as ever.

"I have more than twenty dollars," said Arty, suddenly, breaking a long silence.

"And I have nearly five," said Elgie.

"Indeed!" cried the boy, contentedly. "Between us, then, we shall not have the least difficulty in paying our way to Boston, and for a long time after we arrive there."

"If we can only get there before Mr. Spareman finds us!" supplemented the girl, with a profound sigh. "Where shall we stay to-night—when we can travel no further, I mean?"

"Somewhere by the roadside, no doubt," replied Arty, cheerfully. "Perhaps in some barn or shed, or perhaps in some hay-stack. We can be comfortable almost anywhere if it does not rain, the night is so warm."

For nearly an hour they thus trudged hopefully onward, meeting with no serious adventures. Many were the comforting assurances they exchanged by the way, and many the bright hopes and plans they formed for the future. At the end of the time indicated they seated themselves by the roadside to rest, refreshing themselves with a few morsels of food and with a drink of cold water from a convenient rivulet.

By this time had ceased the nervous flutterings with which they had entered upon their flight, and they had brought themselves to look upon their situation with a coolness and philosophy and sense which did them the greatest credit.

"There must be an opening somewhere for a pair of

stout hands like mine!" breathed Arty, as he drew Elgie's cloak close around her slight figure and held her to his heart.

"And for a pair of willing ones like mine!" returned the girl, with a cheerfulness and courage that astonished her companion. "Perhaps you have not thought what a great girl I am getting to be, Arty. And once away from Mrs. Spareman's, I shall soon be a great deal stronger than you have ever seen me!"

"I do not doubt it," affirmed our hero. "All you want is the fresh air and sunshine, enough to eat, and not too much to do! I dare say we shall find a home in some good family in the course of to-morrow or next day, and that henceforth we can always live together!"

"Oh, I hope so!" sighed Elgie, as she nestled close to Arty's protecting arm. "Let us never again be separated for a day if we can help it. I feel that in all the wide world I have only you to live for, and without you the whole world is a prison and a desert."

Until that hour Arty had not dreamed that such assurances were so pleasant to him, or that Elgie could say them so sweetly. For several minutes he sat as if enraptured, and he did not doubt that Elgie's contentment was equal to his own.

"We must not stay here too long," he finally whispered, arising. "We ought to travel several miles further before we make a final halt for the night. Besides, if we stay here too long without shelter we shall be likely to take cold."

Elgie was in motion before these remarks were concluded, and for another long interval the couple pressed forward resolutely upon the road they had taken. Many miles of distance had now been left between them and the residence of the Sparemans, but still they continued their course.

"How tired you must be!" at length murmured Arty, with a thrill of affectionate admiration.

Elgie made some incoherent reply, but without the least abatement of her cheerfulness. She would not yet confess how weary she was and how painfully her limbs trembled beneath her.

"We shall have to halt soon," said the boy, who comprehended only too clearly from his own feelings what must be those of his companion. "We must stop at the first good place that offers."

"I dare say we shall find friends by the way," avowed Elgie. "It cannot be that any one will harm us."

"The fear is that they may overtake us before we reach Boston," said Arty. "I have often told Mr. Bludgett that I have a horror of being a butcher, and he has as often told me that he would skin me alive if I should ever dare to run away from him."

"We must take care that they don't find us," said Elgie. "Should they pursue us—hark!"

They halted abruptly and listened.

The rumbling of a heavy wagon furiously driven was heard behind them.

"It is Mr. Spareman!" breathed Elgie.

"Or the butcher!" ejaculated Arty. "Our flight is discovered. They are after us. We must hide."

The fugitives had scarcely secured a satisfactory cover by the roadside when a wagon sped swiftly past them. A single grim figure was sitting bolt upright in the vehicle, and the runaways both recognized it at once, despite the darkness, as the figure of Mr. Spareman.

"How fast he rides!" whispered Arty, as the noise of the wagon gradually died out in the distance. "He's certainly determined to find us!"

"But he won't very readily—if he keeps on in that direction!" murmured Elgie, scornfully.

"No, for he shall have all the road to himself," declared the boy. "It is now as dangerous for us to go forward as to go back, and we'll accordingly do neither, but turn into the nearest cross-road and hunt up a good halting-place for the night. You cannot travel much farther, I suppose?"

Elgie hung her head regretfully, as she replied:

"I fear that I cannot!"

"Fortunately the cross-road is not far away. We will soon be safe upon it."

Assisting the girl all he could, Arty led the way to the road in question. The couple had not gone far upon it when they remarked that the air had suddenly freshened.

"We are not far from the sea," whispered our hero.
"Suppose we go on until we come to it?"

"Just as you say!"

For several minutes they pressed forward in weary silence, heedless of the darkness and solitude, and then they found themselves upon a considerable promontory, from which they could look far out upon the grim and troubled waters.

"Yes, here's the sea—the Atlantic, of course?" exclaimed Elgie, as the couple came to a halt.

"Yes, this is the Atlantic!"

"What a lonely spot: Have you ever been here before, Arty?"

"Never!"

"Then you don't know just where we are!"

"No, not exactly. I only know that we are somewhere on the sea-coast, many miles from Mr. Spareman's!"

The girl tottered wearily in her tracks.

"Oh! I can go no further!" she panted, as she sank upon the ground. "How tired I am! I had no idea of it until this moment!"

"Your arm has long been trembling in mine, Elgie, and your steps have long been tottering. But we have reached a spot which seems lonely enough to serve us as a refuge, and I dare say we can find a fish-house or a hut of some kind hereabouts to creep into. I hope you are not sorry you came?"

"Sorry? Oh, I should have died if you had left me behind you. Whatever may be our destiny, Arty, I shall be happy if I but share it with you!"

Gratefully pressing the hand he held, the boy looked around in every direction, listening intently.

A little cove at the base of the promontory at once attracted his attention, and among the adjacent rocks he saw a couple of fisher-cabins.

"We may find shelter there," he said, when he had called the girl's attention to these surroundings, "but how much more comfortable we can be in those close and dirty dens than in the open air, I leave you to imagine."

"Had we better ask for shelter?" demanded the girl. "Will not the fisherman give us up to Mr. Spareman, either at once or to-morrow?"

"It looks likely enough."

Both shuddered at the thought.

"In any case we will take a closer look at the huts, if you are not too tired," said Arty. "All is still there. We have only to be cautious, and no one will discover our presence."

He assisted Elgie to her feet, supporting her with tender care, and they descended to the cove together.

"Yonder is a boat!" suddenly whispered the girl, quickening her steps. "It is out of the water. Perhaps there is a snug nest for us in it."

The boat was one of those little open sloops with which everybody is familiar.

The couple were soon beside it.

"You are right," murmured Arty, after examining the craft as well as he could in the cold, gray shadows. "There is a little cabin forward under the mast, and you can see at a glance how neatly the sail will cover us. It will even keep us from getting wet, if it should rain. Suppose we stay here until morning?"

"It's the only thing we can do," returned Elgie, wearily. "I've walked as far as I can. My feet must be blistered."

"We won't ask for shelter at the huts, then?"

"No, no! They will give us up to Mr. Spareman. Let us rest here till daylight, and go away before any one sees us.'

The situation of affairs was discussed at full length, but the result was inevitable. The couple took possession of the boat, made themselves as comfortable as possible in the little hole under the half deck, and were soon fast asleep.

The tide was already coming in. The beach being flat, the water extended itself shoreward rapidly. The little craft was soon half afloat.

Just then there arrived on the beach the swiftly-moving figure of a man, who sent comprehensive glances of inquiry in every direction around him.

This man was Spareman.

"They must be somewhere in this neighborhood," he said to himself. "Their tracks, where they turned off from the main-road, were plain enough. They may have taken refuge in one of these huts, or possibly in this boat. Ah!"

He had reached the side of the boat whilst thus com-

muning with himself, and the low, regular breathing of the couple now fell upon his hearing.

"Yes, there they are!" he muttered.

A full minute the lone observer stood motionless and thoughtful, bending a long glance in every direction around him—marking the rising tide, the silent huts adjacent, the noisy waves seaward, and the lowering face of the heavens. And while he thus gazed and reflected, a demon-like exultation swiftly mantled his dark features.

"There is going to be a lively old squall," he said to himself, as he held up his hand to the rising wind, and marked the ragged clouds scurrying above him. "No one knows that the children have come this way; no one is looking. I have only to fasten them into their little den—so," and he suited the action to the word. "A single push and they are gone forever, and I shall be the richer by ten thousand dollars."

The tide had now risen so high that the boat nearly floated. A slight push, as Spareman comprehended, was all that was necessary to send it clear of the beach. For one brief instant the man hesitated, as if some remnant of humanity lingered in his breast, and then, by a swift movement, he sent the frail craft adrift. To unfasten and uncoil the rope which secured it to the shore was the work of another instant, and the wind and tide then took complete possession of it, bearing it away rapidly seaward.

"That ends them," chuckled Spareman, as he turned away. "The boat will fill as soon as it is out of the cove, but it's that famous unsinkable belonging to Norridge, I see, and its owner is sure to find it in the morning, and all that's in it! The bodies 'll be found in due course, as just the proofs I want in the case, and not a soul 'll suspect that I've had the least share in the

business. Glorious! This is a fine night's work for me!"

And with this he stole hurriedly away inland, with a single farewell glance over his shoulder at the boat, which was being borne far out on the wild waters!

CHAPTER III.

ARTY'S FIRST ATTEMPT AT NAVIGATION.

From the deep slumbers into which he had fallen, Arty Seaborn was awakened by a lurch that threw him violently against the side of the little cuddy in which he and Elgie had taken refuge.

"That's strange!" he ejaculated.

He knew at once that the boat was moving. But why? And whither?

Gathering himself up on one elbow, he endeavored to send an inquiring glance around him, when another lurch of the boat hurled him in the opposite direction, tumbling him unceremoniously against his companion.

Two such lurches would have sufficed to enlighten even a dull comprehension.

Arty took in the general situation of affairs on the instant.

"Awake, Elgie!" he cried, gathering himself up on allfours, and shaking the girl. "The boat is adrift."

Elgie started up directly. Her surprise and alarm can be imagined.

"Where are we, Arty? What has happened?" she demanded, wildly.

"The boat must have broken loose," responded the

boy, as he endeavored to open the little doors of the cuddy. "Don't you see that she is moving?"

An instant of the profoundest consternation followed. Neither Arty nor Elgie had ever trusted themselves a moment upon the sea, from the hour of the shipwreck which had been so fatal to them, so many years before, and hence a more inexperienced couple for their years it would have been next to impossible to discover.

As surprised and alarmed as he was, however, Arty did not fail to act energetically. It was not without great difficulty that he undid the fastenings of the door, which Spareman had secured upon his intended victims, as will be remembered, but nothing could resist the lad's desperate energy, and at the end of a brief struggle he crept out into the centre of the boat.

The quickened apprehension he felt, as a shower of spray broke over him, produced a cry of wondering terror that called Elgie promptly to his side.

In the first alarm of the moment, neither of them could see anything. The darkness had increased greatly since they took possession of the boat, the bay being now almost universally hidden by a canopy of clouds, and quite a mist having been swept up by a strong breeze from the surface of the sea.

"Do you see the shore?" asked the girl, as she clung to the side of the boat.

"Yes, I see it," answered Arty, as his eyes became more accustomed to the gloom. "It is yonder—behind us!"

The girl looked in horror. The two cliffs defining the entrance of the cove were visible, but fast receding in the shadows. The wind was blowing directly off shore, and had taken complete control of the boat, carrying it seaward with startling swiftness.

It is no disparagement to our young heroine to say

that a flood of tears announced what she felt at that moment. As to Arty, he was already as busy as a bee.

The wind having caught the sail of the boat, which had been lowered in haste and left in a slovenly pile, there was a grand fluttering of canvas and sound of rigging, not to mention a dangerous rolling and plunging of the little vessel. As ignorant as he was of all nautical matters, the boy comprehended that he ought to keep the craft before the wind, and that he could do this only by making proper use of the helm.

In another instant, therefore, he had thrown himself upon the tiller, and moved it sufficiently to bring the boat into the desired position.

"Now, Elgie," he cricd, "if you will steer her, I will tie up that sail!"

The girl could just see through the dense darkness the effect of the pressure Arty was giving the tiller, and her courage rose equal to the emergency. She was beside him in an instant.

"When she pokes her nose one way you must jerk it the other," he explained, giving her a practical illustration of the act—"so! Don't you believe you can manage it?"

"I can try."

With this Elgie took the helm.

The directions of our hero, it is safe to say, were not borrowed from any nautical treatise known to us, but they were none the less adequate to the occasion. He not only comprehended the essential principles in which lay his safety, but he quickly impressed these views upon Elgie, who seconded him with an ability which was as encouraging as surprising.

"There! you can do it!" he exclaimed, after watching the girl a few moments. "When she does that"—the boat was then yawning—"you must move the helm

a little sooner and not quite so violently—so! You are doing splendidly!"

This praise was enough to inspire the girl in the task she had undertaken. Arty conceived such confidence in her almost immediately that he felt at liberty to give his attention to the sail, which was now flapping more violently than ever.

It was no slight task, as the craft was now experiencing the full strength of the squall, for the boy to master the sail, and two or three times he was almost swept overboard by the furious plunges it made, but he finally gathered its most troublesome expansions, and gradually reduced it to obedience, tying it up in such a compact bundle that it lay inert along the bottom of the boat. The mast still presented a grave inconvenience, its top making wide and swift sweeps at every plunge of the boat, but Arty comprehended that it might be broken short off without any instant peril, and he accordingly went back to Elgie with the conviction that the first great danger to which they had been exposed had been duly weathered.

And the lad was right.

In good truth, the couple had already outlived the limits Spareman had assigned them.

The young couple were too inexperienced, of course, to realize how much they had done for themselves, in securing the sail and in getting the boat before the wind; but as they noted how steadily they were going, and how little they were now disturbed or menaced by the wild convulsions of the wind and sea, they could not help feeling that their situation had mended greatly,

"You see nothing of the land now?" breathed Elgie, anxiously, as the boy relieved her at the helm.

"No-of course not," answered Arty, with a calm

dignity worthy of the moment. "We are running directly away from it!"

"I have heard of ships running before the wind,' said Elgie. "Is not that what we are now doing?"

"The very thing!"

"It wouldn't do for us to attempt to turn back—would it, Arty?"

"Do?" cried the young navigator of half an hour, as emphatically as if he had passed the whole of his short life at sea. "Why, if we should attempt to turn back, we'd be caught between two of those big waves, and buried out of sight forever in an instant!"

"Then we must keep on just as we are now going?"

"Certainly—just so long as the wind continues to blow so violently!"

"But are we not going straight out into the ocean, miles and miles from any land?"

"Yes, Elgie; but you need not be frightened at that," said Arty, thoughtfully. "The wind may not blow this way a great while—probably not more than a few hours. We may be able to turn back by morning."

"Oh! I hope so," said Elgie. "We have very little to eat, you know, and not a drop of water to drink. What will become of us if the wind should blow harder and harder for several days, and if we should have to keep going out further into the ocean?"

A cold chill ran over the boy's frame as he listened to this question.

"Let us hope that the case won't be so bad as that," he replied. "At the worst, we may be picked up by some vessel. You must have often looked out from the shore and seen lots of ships coming and going in every direction?"

"Of course-often."

The couple were not a little comforted by this seasonable recollection.

"I wish we had a compass," murmured Elgie, after a considerable interval of silence, as she seated herself as closely as possible to Arty. "Can we get along without one?"

"We shall have to, of course, if we get along at all," answered the boy with a sigh. "Should to-morrow be cloudy it will be impossible for us to tell what course we ought to take, and perfectly useless for us to attempt to take any. But if the sun should be visible, we shall not have any difficulty in telling which direction is west. All we have to do is to keep the sun on the left hand in the forenoon, and more or less ahead—according to the hour—in the afternoon."

The girl was silent again, thinking what a brave and wise boy Arty was, and cherishing deep in her soul a thousand tender admirations for him.

"Perhaps some good will come to us from the sea, Arty—after so much evil," she suddenly remarked, giving voice to her reveries. "We may learn who we are, how we came to be shipwrecked in the *Emerald*, and all about our parents. Do you suppose we are brother and sister, Arty, as everybody seems to think?"

"No, I don't believe a word of it."

"Then I shall be your wife some day, Arty."

"Perhaps you will see somebody that you will like better," suggested the boy, continuing to guide the boat with undaunted courage.

"Oh, never! never!"

"How do you know you won't?"

"Because—because I know I sha'n't. And if it should turn out that you are really my brother, I will keep house for you, and we will be ever so happy." "You are not yet sorry you ran away, then?" demanded the boy, still minding his helm.

The fair, sweet face of the girl lighted strangely, as she responded:

"No; and I never shall be. We are in great danger, Arty, I suppose, and it's hard to say what will become of us, but I am not afraid to die, and I have not the least wish to live as I have been living. If I had all there is in the world, Arty, I should never forget that there is a brighter and better world than this, where there is neither danger nor sorrow, where there are no wicked people, no sickness, nothing to make us unhappy, but where everything is grand and beautiful, and where all the men and women and boys and girls are angels Oh! how often and often I have wished that we could die, Arty, and never be bothered any more with Mr. Bludgett and Mr. and Mrs. Spareman, but always be with each other in heaven."

"I've often wished the same thing, Elgie," avowed the boy. "But I do not feel so now. I feel now that I would like to grow up and be a man, and have a beautiful little home, with a horse and a cow, and live just like Mr. Garret and his wife, and like so many other happy people. Would it not be glorious?"

The girl's eyes twinkled again.

"Oh, so grand!" she answered. "If we can only get out of this trouble, we will find a good place to work and save all our money, and in a few years buy or build a house that we will have all to ourselves!"

A lor ger silence than the previous ones now fell between the couple, for the reason that Arty was very busy at the helm, and that Elgie was absorbed in the bright pictures of the future she had allowed herself to cherish. The face of the ocean was now wrapped in the "darkness which precedes the dawn," and the squall

had reached its culmination, so that it was only by constant watchfulness and exertion that the lad could hold at bay the lively dangers by which he was menaced.

But at last a dull, grayish light began breaking directly ahead, stealing right and left upon the horizon and creeping up toward the zenith.

"See!" cried Elgie, excitedly, after she had contemplated the increasing radiance several minutes. "It's the beginning of morning!"

"Yes, it will soon be daylight!" returned Arty.
"The worst is over!"

The gladness and relief with which the couple continued to watch the illumination of the heavens can be readily imagined. After the darkness and peril of the long night they had traversed, the day was doubly welcome.

"And I do believe the wind is going down," exclaimed Elgie, after a long contemplation of the white crests around her. "Are not the waves smaller?"

"Hardly—so soon," replied the boy, "but there is certainly less wind. The day promises to be fine. You can almost see where the sun is going to rise out of the water!"

"Yes, it's where those gleams are shooting up so brightly into the sky," returned Elgie. "And see how light it is getting everywhere! How far we can see! And all around us water—nothing but water—not the least sign of land. How strange it seems to be here! I hardly know whether to be afraid or to think that it is nice!"

The first few minutes of the new day were devoted to an anxious search for a sail, but none was in sight. It seemed to the young couple that they were not merely alone upon the ocean, but that they were lost in its immensities.

"How far do you suppose we are from the shore?" asked Elgie, suddenly.

"Thirty or forty miles at least!"

"Are not the waves getting smaller? Shall we not be able to turn back before long?"

"I mean to make the effort," avowed Arty, gravely.
"In the meantime, suppose we have breakfast—a bite of the lunch you were so thoughtful as to bring with you from Mrs. Spareman's!"

The "bite" was taken—a very sparing one, for the couple realized only too clearly how insufficiently they were supplied with provisions.

"Thus far we have had an easy time of it," observed the boy. "When we face about we shall find everything different. But if we don't put about soon, we shall not be able to reach the shore before dark! And another night on the water is out of the question entirely!"

These and various other considerations decided Arty upon putting about at the earliest possible moment, as keenly as he realized the difficult nature of that measure.

"We cannot sail a rod shorewards, you know, without raising the sail," he exclaimed. "As soon as we are faced the other way, you must take charge of the helm, and I must draw up the sail and fasten this rope to the side of the boat."

He explained the proposed manœuvre as clearly as possible to Elgie, and they then set about its execution. The boat was hove to, her prow rounding up into the wind as neatly as if Arty had passed all his life upon the sea, and then he relinquished the helm to Elgie, and began hoisting the sail. By the time it was half-extended, the wind took hold of it sharply, and the boat began clearing the waters shoreward.

"You see!" cried Arty, "we can manage it."

Bending all his energies to the task, he soon had the sail fully hoisted and the sheet secured, and by this time the frail craft was moving upon her homeward course even more swiftly, apparently, than she had previously flown in the opposite direction. The pressure now brought upon the rudder was so great that the boy was obliged to fly to Elgie's assistance.

"Perhaps we ought to have waited," said he, nervously, as he marked the pressure upon sail and helm. "And yet to wait was impossible. We must now do or die."

The result of these proceedings can already be foreseen by the intelligent reader.

Unqualified for the task he had undertaken, the lad soon had his sail shivering in the wind, and before he could rectify his error, both helm and sail were taken aback. For one brief instant the stanch little craft stood up stiffly to the awful pressure put upon her, and then went over like a flash, turning bottom upward.

CHAPTER IV.

ANOTHER MYSTERIOUS VISIT.

Rejoicing in his evil work like a demon, Joshua Spareman returned to the great shore road, where he had left his horse, chuckling as he went, and exhibiting in his footsteps an excitement akin to inebriation. Taking his seat in his wagon, he drove swiftly homewards. So perfectly did his nervous exhilaration transfer itself to his steed, through the medium of the whip, that in less than an hour after sending the young people adrift, he

was again at his house, although he called by the way upon his family physician.

He was not surprised to find his wife upon the front veranda and anxiously awaiting his coming, pacing to and fro with strides worthy of one of the King of Dahomey's Amazonian warriors.

"I have ordered the doctor to come as soon as he can," was Spareman's first announcement, as he leaped from his wagon.

"The doctor?" gasped Mrs. Spareman, recoiling, "are you crazy, Joshua? What do you want of the doctor?"

Spareman rubbed his hands quickly and noiselessly together, as was his wont in seasons of joyful excitement, and inclined his head close to his wife's.

"I want the doctor to cover the proceedings of this night," he whispered, in a voice too low to have reached any other ears than those for which it was intended. "It may get abroad that I have made a small journey within two or three hours past, and it will not be bad for me to be able to give a good reason for my absence to any inquirer."

Mrs. Spareman comprehended at once.

"You are a genius, Joshua," she muttered, as she led the way into the sitting-room. "Always as cautious as sharp. But what did you say ailed me?"

"I didn't mention you, Jerushy, but merely told the doctor that one of the children had a sort of fit or attack of convulsions."

"Good! Then all I have to say to the doctor is that I brought the poor thing out of it long before your return, and then he will leave his usual powder or pill, after making a few inquiries, and vanish. But them runaways, Joshua—what of them runaways? Have you found them?"

"Yes, I have found them," replied Spareman, with ill-

concealed jubilation. "They took the shore road, as we supposed. Has Bludgett been back?"

"No. He said he'd make a thorough search in his neighborhood, and not see us again until morning.

But the children, Joshua? Where are they?"

"Somewhere off the coast, in the form of shark-bait," affirmed Spareman, joyously. "Their sudden move has turned out a very good thing for us—very good, indeed. They have spared us the necessity of ever getting rid of them. In a word, they have got rid of themselves. Let me tell you just how the thing happened, Jerushy, and just how I've taken the bull by the horns."

Dropping into a chair, the heartless villain proceeded to detail the situation of the young couple, dwelling with infernal delight upon his own share in the infamous transaction. The amazement of Mrs. Spareman was excelled only by her pleasure.

"Is it possible," she whispered, when her husband had concluded—"is it possible you have sent them adrift upon the ocean?"

"That's jest where they are," assured Spareman, with a savage joy. "They are drowned long ago, but will be found in the morning. Ah, a footstep," he added, arising. "It's the doctor, doubtless. Get rid of him while I put out the horse. Be sure to act your part to perfection."

The horse was soon in his stall, and the husband and wife again together in the kitchen, the doctor having made his call even briefer than expected. The subject nearest their hearts was at once resumed.

"If Mr. Runnel will only keep his word, we have made a good thing out of the business," said Mrs. Spareman, drawing her chair close to her husband. "But what if he should fail to keep his agreement? What if he should deny all knowledge of us and of the

children? He may take that course to save paying us the ten thousand dollars. Isn't it possible?"

"Yes, it's possible, but not probable," declared Spareman, with the deliberation of a deep conviction. "Grebb Runnel is a man of his word. I know him of old. What he might do if hard pushed for money, there's no telling; but Grebb is a man who knows how to keep his pocket book well-filled, and one who never goes back on a friend. He'll keep his agreement, no doubt."

"He ought to, certainly," said Mrs. Spareman, emphatically, speaking half to herself. "Goodness knows he was anxious enough to have them children out of the way. He wanted 'em to drop out of sight in a nateral sort o' way, and what could be more nateral than for them young uns to run away together and be carried out to sea in a boat? It all looks like an accident, and is just the sort of accident Runnel suggested."

A sudden grim sternness crept into Spareman's eyes. "Don't fret yourself, Jerushy," he said. "Runnel will certainly pay. I know him too well—as long ago as I was trading on the west coast of Africa—for him to throw me overboard on a transaction of such importance. Oh! he'll settle fast enough, you may be certain."

The words had scarcely left his lips when there came a vigorous knock upon the outer door of the kitchen.

The violence of the starts given by the couple can be imagined. Mrs. Spareman even turned deathly pale. It was not so much the lateness of the hour that rendered that knock startling, as the sinister conversation and train of thought in which it found the evilminded couple indulging.

"Goodness! who can it be?" gasped the wife, the first to find her tongue.

[&]quot;Some neighbor, probably," guessed Spareman.

The knock was repeated with fierce impatience. The couple both started again.

"That's no neighbor," whispered the wife. "It's somebody we don't wish to see, no doubt. Possibly some constable! Oh, you must have been seen, Joshua!"

She wrung her hands anxiously.

"In that case, I'll fight for it," returned Spareman, as he carried his hand to a double-barrelled pistol concealed on his person. "But don't be frightened, Jerushy. I'll see who it is."

Stepping quickly to the door, Spareman threw it wide open, with the energetic boldness of a man who defies the very worst that can possibly happen. With a step of corresponding promptness, a tall, muffled figure crossed the threshold, bowing alternately, with a careless and indifferent sort of grace, to each of the persons before him.

A single word burst from the lips of Spareman, and that word a name:

"Runnel!"

The man advanced more into the light.

"Yes, I am Runnel," he acknowledged, removing his hat and cloak. "Glad to see you, Joshua. Your servant, madam. How do you all do?"

And he proffered a brawny hand to each.

"Goodness!" ejaculated Mrs. Spareman, as her eyes roved swiftly up and down the commanding form before her. "So this is Mr. Runnel? What a surprise you have given us!"

"Sit down, old boy," cried Spareman, with a final hearty shake, as he placed a chair for his guest. "This is indeed a surprise for us, as Jerushy says. We never should have thought of looking for you at such a late hour!"

"And yet I find you up," said the guest, significantly, as he dropped into the proffered chair.

"Well, yes-"

"The fact is," continued Runnel, lightly, "late hours are the proper hours for such birds as us, old boy, and for such business as is likely to be transacted between us! How are the children?"

"Very well, indeed," replied Mrs. Spareman,

"although little Joshua-"

The visitor interrupted her with a quick gesture.

"I am not asking after your own progeny, Mrs. Spareman," he explained, "for I took it for granted that their health corresponds to your own. I referred to the young couple in whom I am especially interested—Arty and Elgie!"

The eager interest manifested in the voice and manner of Runnel struck both of his companions.

"They are well, I hope!" added the visitor, as he looked keenly from one to the other.

Spareman exchanged a complacent grin with his wife.

"Yes, they are both well," he then replied—"very well, indeed!"

The visitor drew a long breath of relief.

"I am glad to hear this," he said. "Everybody remains as much in the dark as ever, I suppose, in regard to the young couple? Nobody knows where they came from or who they are?"

"Certainly not," answered Spareman, as he and his wife both seated themselves. "How should anybody here learn anything about them? The neighbors don't even know who I am," and he grinned again. "They little imagine that I was a pirate and a slaver in other days, and that my advent into their little village sixteen years ago was made in the character of a fugitive seeking a hiding-place. Why should the wooden-heads

know of any of these things? You and I, Runnel, are not the sort of men to blow facts of this nature through a trumpet! But excuse me!"

Leaping nimbly to his feet, Spareman produced a stout bottle from an adjacent cupboard, and placed a couple of tumblers upon the table in front of the visitor, with the remark:

"There is your old favorite, Grebb. Help yourself."
Runnel acted upon the invitation, and even Mrs.
Spareman joined the two men in an instant and paid marked attention to the portly bottle.

"Did my former visit to you ever get out?" asked the

visitor, as he sipped the burning liquid.

"Well, yes—quite an idea of it," answered Spareman, regretfully. "Somebody must have seen us together, or seen you coming or going. In any case a rumor got abroad that a stranger had been here to make inquiries after the loss of the brig and about the two children, but I swore to everybody that it was all a lie, and the matter died out quite readily. I need hardly add that Jerushy and I have never lisped a word to any human being. We had too much at stake to do so. We have quite a large family of our own coming upon the stage, and are not a little pinched in our resources, so that we have been looking forward with great interest and eagerness to earning that money."

"Naturally enough," returned Runnel. "The boy has continued to live with the butcher, I suppose, and

the girl with you?"

The husband and wife nodded in concert.

"They have had some instruction, I hope," continued the visitor, thoughtfully—" are smart and bright, no doubt, and make a good appearance?"

The couple looked puzzled.

"Why, as to that, Grebb," said Spareman, hesitat-

ingly, "you left no orders about any instruction, you may remember. All you said was that the children were greatly in your way, and that you would give us ten thousand dollars for satisfactory proofs of their death."

"True, I said that-"

"And we have accordingly borne in mind your instructions and wishes, and have done all in our power to earn your approbation—and the money. The boy has been worked nearly to death, and various traps have been set for him, but his good luck has never deserted him. As to the gal, she has taken many a dose that ought to have settled her, but she's fire-proof certain. And as you seemed so anxious to get rid of them—"

"True, I was anxious in that way," assented Runnel, with a shade of impatience, "but times have changed within a year or two, and— You say the couple are quite well?"

The voice of the visitor was sharp with anxiety, as he abruptly asked this question. The puzzled look of the husband and wife deepened to uneasiness, but they rallied and grinned again horribly, as Spareman replied:

"Oh, yes—they are well—as I was about to tell you. They've lived and lived in defiance of your wishes and ours, Grebb—have lived and lived as if there'd never be any end to their living. But to-night they ran away together, and journeyed several miles along the shore road toward Boston, and finally lay down in a boat and went to sleep, and somehow the boat went adrift in the squall that jest then began blowing—"

A cry of horrible consternation escaped the lips of the visitor, as he leaped excitedly to his feet and gasped:

"Surely, you don't mean-"

[&]quot;But I do, though," declared Spareman, with grim

directness, mistaking the nature of Runnel's excitement; "that is jest what I mean! I sent 'em adrift in the boat, and they're now as dead as hatchets!"

For a moment the visitor stood as if petrified, and then he threw himself upon Spareman as if he would tear the startled wretch in pieces. Mrs. Spareman interposed in her husband's favor as quick as possible, uttering loud screams and cries. It was chiefly the uproar she made that recalled the visitor to his senses.

"Why, you told me to kill 'em!" cried Spareman, as soon as he was free.

"True!" panted Runnel.

"I was only obeying orders!"

"True; but the situation is changed entirely!" continued Runnel. "Oh, villain! villain! you know not what you've done! You've ruined me! Not for a million dollars would I have the least harm come to those children!"

The word million, in relation to money, is always electrical. Mr. and Mrs. Spareman recovered their equanimity with the celerity of a flash of lightning.

"Why, in that case, all may be well yet," declared the woman.

"If we are spry," supplemented the husband, composing his ruffled exterior. "The boat is unsinkable, and the couple may make a good fight for it, so that we can recover them safely at an early hour of the morning!"

Runnel flushed as if threatened with apoplexy. The hope that shot through his whole being resembled a convulsion.

"Oh! if we can save them," he gasped.

"We can at least try," returned Spareman.

"I was to give you only ten thousand dollars to rid me of them?" continued Runnel. "Yes, yes!" cried Mrs. Spareman.

"But I will give you twice that sum, Spareman, if we can save them," finished the visitor—"that is to say, twenty thousand dollars in cash, if we are in time!"

The cries of joy uttered by Spareman and his wife at this promise were incoherent. With that proneness to see everything as we want it to be, they were now as certain of saving the lives of the couple as they had been certain a moment before of their death.

"Quick, then!" cried Spareman. "You and I must ride like lightning, Grebb, to the cove in which the children went adrift. In five minutes we can have our horses harnessed and be off."

In less than the time named, the two men were dashing away at a gallop, each too absorbed in his own thoughts for utterance—Runnel in thoughts of the children, and Spareman in thoughts of the promised reward.

Would they be in time?

The cove was reached in due course, despite several narrow escapes from upsetting. The two men leaped to the ground, at the same instant arousing the solitary inhabitants of the spot with their cries.

"Two children adrift," explained Spareman excitedly to the two fishermen that emerged from the huts we have noticed. "They've gone adrift in the missing boat—an hour or two since, doubtless. A hundred dollars to each of you to help us find them!"

The hardy fishermen did not need a money reward for their services at such a juncture, but the promise did not the less stimulate them to heroic exertion. A boat externally resembling the missing one was promptly launched and manned, and in a moment thereafter was flying swiftly seaward.

Pale, haggard, and mentally convulsed, Runnel stood

rigidly erect just forward of the mast, to which he clung, and sent his wild glances as far ahead as possible into the misty darkness.

"Oh, that we may save them!" he murmured, under his breath. "Oh, that we may save them!"

CHAPTER V.

THE PURSUERS.

It would have been difficult to tell which of the two men we left flying in pursuit of our hero and heroine, was the most in earnest—Joshua Spareman or Grebb Runnel.

The whole soul of Runnel was bound up in the successful issue of the business, to be sure, but so was Spareman's; the offer of twenty thousand dollars for the recovery of the young couple having endowed that greedy villain with all the zeal and energy of which any human being is capable.

Not a word passed between the pursuers save in regard to the matter in hand, and as their course of action had been self-evident from the moment of leaving Spareman's house until their embarkation in the boat, they had not had occasion for either speculation or inquiry.

But once embarked with their two fishermen, in a boat much resembling, in size and rig, that in which the boy and girl had been sent adrift, the tongues of the two deeply interested and excited men became loosened.

They were now in the realm of conjecture, and, con-

sequently, in a field calculated to render them eager for information and advice.

"They must have more than two hours the start of us!" muttered Runnel, as the boat began to clear the cove.

"Two hours and a half, at the least!" returned Spareman, quickly.

"Then they must have been blown many miles out to sea!" pursued Runnel. "What course are they drifting?"

"We must learn the exact direction of the wind before we can answer that question," declared Spareman "Norridge here can settle that p'int for us!"

The fisherman appeared to scan his compass by the light of his lantern.

"The wind is about sou' by east," he then said oracularly; "and it has doubtless been so ever since this 'ere squall set in. But then there is summat of a current to the north'ard along this coast, as everybody knows, for which we must make allowance. My 'pinion is, therefore, that we must look for the youngsters jest about to the east'ard! What say you, Bill?"

The second fisherman fully confirmed the reasoning of his comrade.

"To the eastward be it, then," exclaimed Runnel, with suppressed excitement. "Double-reef your sail, so as to go as slow as possible, or we shall run past them long before daylight."

The order was acted upon by the two fishermen, while Runnel stood looking moodily into the darkness ahead of him.

"The boy was no sailor, I suppose?" he suddenly cried.

"No sailyer at all, but greener than a squash," replied Spareman.

"Then there is not the least likelihood that he has been able to handle his boat in this storm and darkness?"

The cheeks of Spareman flushed hotly, as he remembered how he had fastened the young couple into their cuddy, and his voice sounded hollow and strange to even himself, as he replied:

"No, there was not the least chance for him to play the sailyer."

Lowering his voice, he added:

"They had stowed themselves away in the cuddy, and I doubt if they had the presence of mind to get out of there after the boat capsized."

"You consider it certain, then, that the boat capsized soon after leaving the cove?"

"Certainly, or filled—which amounts to the same thing. She was left to herself, you know, and in this sea and wind could not fail to do the one thing or the other."

Runnel had all he could do to restrain the anger and disgust he experienced for his companion in iniquity.

"You have done a fine job for me in sending them adrift," he growled in Spareman's ear. "It will be the worse for you if anything has happened to them."

Spareman was at first abashed by the remark, but quickly rallied, and responded stiffly:

"I was only carrying out your instructions, Cap'n Runnel, you will be pleased to remember."

The two men here became silent again, but their thoughts were busier than ever.

"He may growl," said Spareman to himself, as he glanced slyly at his companion. "As I acted by his orders, he shall pay me for my work, whether it suits his present mood or not."

"The cursed idiot!" Runnel was thinking at the same

moment. "There are ten chances to one that he has ruined me. If I do not find those children alive, my cake's dough beyond all question."

"There is one p'int I've not fully stated to you, Grebb," spoke up Spareman, abruptly. "The boat in which the children are adrift is not an ordinary craft, but is the only one of its kind ever seen here. It is, in fact, a life-boat that the inventor brought down here from Boston to try in the surf. It's not merely unsinkable, as I've told you already, but it's provided with all sorts of contrivances for saving life, and would float like a feather in the biggest hurricane that ever blowed. The craft belongs to Norridge, who can tell you its history."

"The history is not a long one to tell," said the old fisherman. "All I need say is that the inventor tried his boat once too often in the surf, before he had got everything to suit him, and the next morning the boat was found bottom-side-up, with the inventor under it, and he as dead as a herring. The boat was soon after sold at auction by the landlord of the tavern where the inventor had left quite a bill, and as nobody else'd bid much on it, I bid it off at twenty-five dollars!"

The "history" had a dispiriting effect upon Runnel. "The boat has been unlucky from the start, it seems," he growled.

"True, but what is one man's fodder is any other man's p'ison!" returned Spareman. "That're craft'll float like a duck! Whichever end or side of her is up, there'll allers be enough of her out o' water to burrer in or stand on or cling to! If them young uns should have had their wits about them—"

Runnel interrupted the speculation with a general movement of impatience, transferring himself to the stern of the boat, with the remark:

"I'll talk to these old fishermen. Perhaps they can give me some practical information!"

"If you want my advice," said Norridge, "I can give it to you in a nut shell. We'd better run just as we are runnin' and steer just as we are steerin' until daylight. If the runaways are not then in sight, we shall know that they are not ahead of us, and will come straight back to meet them."

Runnel's face brightened.

"That covers the whole ground," he commented.

"In the meantime we must watch for the capsized boat, although we shan't be able to see her any great distance in this darkness."

"Possibly we may hear the boy yelling," suggested Norridge. "In any case, we must watch and listen."

For two hours longer the pursuers held to their course in accordance with the programme of Norridge, and at the end of that time the first gleams of a new day made their appearance.

With what eager interests the four men watched every development of the morning can be imagined.

In their impatience and excitement, Spareman and Runnel both saw the missing boat repeatedly in clouds and showers of spray, between darkness and dawn; but they were at length compelled to realize, with the two fishermen, that not the least sign of the fugitives and their boat was visible within the range of the pursuers' visions.

"This is singular—discouraging," cried Runnel, when he could no longer discredit the evidence of his senses, the day having fully broken. "That extraordinary life-boat that floated like a duck, must have gone straight to the bottom. What is your opinion, Norridge?"

"My opinion is that we have run past the life-boat.

I didn't expect to see her at daylight, and I don't. She's probably twelve or fifteen miles behind us."

"Then we have only to stand straight back to the

shore to meet her?"

"That's my opinion."

"Then go about immediately."

The order was obeyed and the boat retraced her course, sailing as near to the wind as possible, and occasionally changing her tack in order to keep near the line of the life-boat's supposed drifting. But as the life-boat had in reality sailed faster than her pursuer, and had had nearly three hours the start, it was not strange that Runnel and his companions saw nothing of her, neither when daylight broke around them nor when they had retraced the twelve or fifteen miles mentioned by Norridge.

"The thing is turning out as I supposed it would," declared Runnel, with a volley of curses, when he had scoured the neighborhood in which the two fishermen were so sure of finding the missing boat. "We are at the end of our calculations, and no sign of them. What is the next move?"

The question was too difficult for any of his companions to answer. All remained silent.

"Why don't you speak up, Spareman?" continued Runnel, angrily, as he turned to his confederate. "What's the next move? Out with it."

Spareman was now turning pale and flushing alternately as uneasily as a fish out of water.

"I'm up a stump!" he confessed, after a long cogitation. "But I'll never believe that the life-boat has gone under!"

"Then where is she?"

"She may not be so directly east of the starting-point

as we supposed. She may be to the north of us, and she may be to the south ard!"

"And you may be a fool, for all I can see to the contrary!" exclaimed Runnel, losing his self-command. "A pretty kettle we've got into!"

The fishermen smiled at the vexation of their employers, exchanging careless glances of merriment with each other.

"What do you advise, Norridge?" resumed Runnel.
"Are you up a stump, too?"

"Not at all, sir," replied the fisherman. "Our proper course is as plain as the nose on your face!"

"Let's know what it is!"

"I don't believe the life-boat is to the east'ard of us, and if she is, it would be like looking for a needle in a haystack for us to attempt to find her!"

"We can at least try!"

"No, sir! We'd be fools to sail another mile in that direction. You must remember that there isn't a drop of water nor a mouthful of food aboard of this 'ere boat—and I for one would like a drink and a breakfast already."

"We can't sail seaward, then?"

"Not unless you want to run a good risk of starving to death."

"Then what shall we do?" demanded Runnel, impatiently.

"We'd better return to the shore, making several tacks by the way, and keeping a good look-out," replied Norridge. "I do not have the least doubt of seeing the life-boat within an hour or two, if she's still afloat but if we fail to see anything of her, we shall at least reach the shore in the course of the day, and so save our bacon—which, I take it, is a p'int not to be lost sight of."

The vexation of Runnel at these prospects was too great to be concealed.

"I see," he commented, savagely. "Our search for the runaways will turn out a failure. We shall see nothing of them—"

"But it's quite possible that we shall hear, upon our return, of their having been picked up by some coaster," suggested Norridge.

"And this is all we have to look forward to," cried Runnel. "A pretty business, I must say. Well, well, Norridge, go on in the way you proposed. That is the only course now left us."

The two fishermen lost no time in heading for shore, and Runnel and Spareman continued their eager look-out in silence.

Nothing was seen, of course, of the missing boat, or of our hero and heroine. It was in vain that the pursuers passed the whole morning in the broiling sun, hungry and thirsty, and torn with a thousand despairs and regrets. In vain that the two fishermen offered moody supplementary suggestions and that they were acted upon. Beyond the passage of a coaster or two within speaking distance, and a glimpse of an outward bound European ship, hull down, on the horizon, not the least sign of a sail was vouchsafed them.

It was late in the afternoon when the pursuers returned to the cove from which they had set out upon their fruitless quest. By this time Runnel and Spareman were both feverish with hunger, and their tongues cleaved with thirst to the roofs of their mouth.

"What's to pay?" asked Runnel briefly, as he leaped ashore.

"I should say we oughter to have fifty dollars for this job, Cap'n," replied Norridge.

"There's a hundred," returned Runnel, as he passed

the fisherman a bright new note, "and I will give you as much more if you can send me, within a few days, a line about that life-boat and the young couple. Here's a card containing my address, and I hope to hear from you promptly."

And with this, Runnel began striding away nervously, paying not the least heed to his late traveling companion.

"One moment, Grebb," called Spareman, running after Runnel, and changing all sorts of colors.

"Well, what do you want?" asked Runnel savagely, as he halted and faced his confederate.

"I hope you're not going off in this fashion, Grebb," said Spareman. "I must have at least five thousand dollars to-day of the ten you are owing me!"

"Owing you?" sneered Runnel.

"Yes, owing me!" affirmed Spareman, growing bolder at the thought of the sum mentioned. "Orders is orders, you must remember, and in sending the children adrift, I was only carrying out one of the identical hints you gave me in the course of your former visit. It's not my fault that you have changed your mind, and that you blow hot one day and cold the next. I must have at least five thousand dollars for services actually rendered, Grebb, and I must have 'em to-day!"

Runnel raged like a tiger.

"You'll never get a dollar of me, Spareman, unless you produce those children alive!" he declared, sternly. "Why, you infernal fool! You've ruined me—broken up the loveliest little arrangement that ever existed! To think of all I am in danger of losing— But let me not waste time and words upon you! When you have found those children, write me. Until then, adieu!"

And Runnel walked rapidly away.

"You will at least ride home with me?" called Spare,

man, swallowing his bitter pill with the best grace he could.

"No, I'll be blest if I do!" replied Runnel. "I am going in another direction—to Boston as straight as an arrow, and thence to South Carolina. Write me, as before, to the care of my agents in Charleston. And if you have the least sense or energy, do try to make up for the horrible blunder you have committed. Good afternoon!"

And with this Runnel resumed his hurried departure.

"The infernal dolt!" burst from his lips as soon as he was alone. "Those children are dead, and can never be produced! My little game is knocked in the head. I must set things to rights by some bold roguery! And first of all to act towards Mrs. Hillston before she can learn this horrible business!"

CHAPTER VI.

DESOLATION AND DESPAIR.

A little out of Charleston, upon the crest of a beautiful plateau, from which the land slopes gently down to the Ashley and Cooper rivers, and not far from midway between them, stood one of the handsomest residences to be seen in that neighborhood, in the midst of one of those vast and productive estates, which nowhere exist in greater beauty and perfection than in the Palmetto State.

This property had long belonged to the wealthy and eminent family of Hillston, and for many years had been in the hands of Col. Abner Hillston, the last of a long line of honorable and distinguished gentlemen, whose annals dated from the first settlement of the country, and even for hundreds of years previous, the ancient progenitors of the family having been renowned in England as far back as the middle ages.

The colonel was now dead, and a blight seemed to have fallen upon the fine and roomy mansion from which he had vanished. The doors and windows were kept closed, and an air of woful desolation seemed to permeate the whole place, as if with the life of the master all other life had departed.

The sole proprietress of the premises was now Mrs. Hillston, the colonel's widow.

At a late hour of the very evening upon which Arty and Elgie Seaborn had set out upon their fateful travels, as related, Mrs. Hillston was pacing wearily to and fro in one of the large chambers of the Hillston mansion. She was clad in the sable habiliments of grief; the only white visible on her person being the simple lawn frills at her throat and wrists, and her air was well in keeping with her garb, her countenance wearing a look of unrest and loneliness to which no human tongue could have given adequate expression. And yet her sable weeds could not mar her glorious loveliness, nor could her wild sorrow and solitude for one instant hide the sweetness of her spirit, the gentleness of her manners, the delicacy of her refinement, or the commanding dignity of her womanhood.

The unhappy lady was still young. Despite the threads of silvery hue which had appeared in her hair, and despite even the deep lines of grief which had stamped themselves for all time upon her cheeks and around her sensitive mouth, it was not difficult to see that her years scarcely exceeded thirty, and that in all

the desolations of her life she had never ceased to be sustained by the angel of hope.

The form of Mrs. Hillston was thin and her cheeks wasted and emaciated, but not so thin, and wasted as to detract essentially from a beauty which had once been truly peerless. Every look and gesture was still animated, her every step still graceful and commanding, and her bearing full of energy and fire.

"A year to-night," came in barely audible tones from her lips—"a year to-night."

Words fail us to describe the sad unrest expressed in her silvery voice.

Pausing in front of a portrait which occupied a prominent place on the wall, she bowed her head in an uncontrollable fit of weeping.

The portrait was that of the late colonel, her husband. Just a year had passed since she had laid him in his grave.

The sad recollections of the weeping lady were at length interrupted by a discreet knock upon one of the doors of the apartment. Dropping into a chair, she composed her features by a resolute effort, and bade the knocker enter.

The new-comer proved to be her maid, a quiet, sympathizing and capable woman, upon the downhill side of life, who had passed all her mature years in the service of the family.

"If you please, madam," announced the maid, "the Reverend Mr. Ashley is here."

"Show him in at once, Mrs. Willset," commanded the mistress. "I am awaiting him."

A minute later the beau ideal of a kind, refined and even-tempered pastor, with all the glory of his religion and blameless life hanging like a radiance about him, entered her presence. She received him as became his character and station. "You do me great honor, as well as a great service, Mr. Ashley, in responding so promptly to my summons," she said, after greetings had been exchanged. "As a weary child I come to you," and she heaved a deep sigh. "I need your ministrations—the peace that you alone can give me."

The clergyman drew his chair nearer to Mrs. Hillston's, and continued holding in his own the jeweled hand she had offered him.

"I hope you do not look merely to me, madam, but to One greater than I—to Him I so unworthily and inadequately represent," returned Mr. Ashley, in a tone of deep sympathy. "Man is as powerless to bless as to save. You must look higher. In all the wide world there is only one secure refuge and one unfailing comfort. You must look, not to me, but to Heaven."

"I do! I do! I am nearly done with the world, Mr. Ashley, and with all things in it. The long war is nearly over," and a pitiful attempt at a smile wreathed her lips. "The heart so long steeled to bear and to suffer is breaking."

A flood of tears relieved the agony with which these words were spoken. Mr. Ashley was a true comforter. He knew when to speak and when to keep silent. For several minutes he mingled his tears in silence with those of his unhappy companion.

"I want your advice," resumed Mrs. Hillston, with the abruptness of a deep pre-occupation. "You are aware of the great misery of my life, no doubt, but I must recall a few of its particulars. You doubtless remember that, after my betrothal to Colonel Hillston, I was sought in marriage by a man named Runnel?"

The clergyman bowed sadly.

[&]quot;I am aware of the principal facts of all that horrible

business, of course," he said. "But why recall them now? Why—"

"Bear with me, Mr. Ashley," interrupted Mrs. Hillston, in the accents of a dominating grief. "I but recall these facts of the past for our present guidance. The said Runnel, although wealthy and apparently respectable, was almost a stranger to me, and had not the least cause to count upon the acceptance of his suit. But he was angry at his rejection, and vowed that he would take a terrible revenge."

The clergyman inclined his head still more sadly, but with the air of doubting the wisdom of these reviews of the past, and Mrs. Hillston continued:

"You are aware how that menace was executed. My little boy and girl—my twin children—had scarcely entered their third year, when they disappeared strangely one night, as if blotted from the face of the earth, and from that hour I have not set eyes upon them!"

"I am only too familiar with the sad tale," said the clergyman, gently. "You supposed that Runnel had stolen the children!"

"The supposition was a certainty, only we could not prove it!" resumed Mrs. Hillston. "No trace was left by the spoiler. It was in vain that my husband had that wicked man sought for. It was years before he was found, and when found, not the least clue was gained to the whereabouts of our children. It was equally in vain that my husband caused the miscreant to be followed and watched—that he was tracked to the wilds of Africa—to scores of distant lands—throughout the great oceans. The implacable villain kept only too well his terrible secret!"

The clergyman bowed his head as if crushed. Only too well did he know the horrible story!

Mrs. Hillston continued:

"And so the years have dragged away; my husband and I never doubting in the goodness of God, and never wholly despairing of some day finding our lost ones, but I have not the least doubt that the long deferring of this hope was one of the causes of my husband's death. The doctors said he was worn out with his long quest, but I know that his heart was withered with its weight of woe. He died a year ago—"

"And you are still in the same great darkness in which he left you?" asked Mr. Ashley, as Mrs. Hillston again gave way to her emotion. "You do not even know that the said Runnel stole your children?"

"Yes, I know it!"

The clergyman started.

"What, you really know it?" he demanded, excitedly.

"Yes, I know it! I had the avowal from his own lips!"

"You have seen him, then?"

"I have seen him!"

The manner of Mrs. Hillston was now characterized by a wild exultation. Her cheeks glowed feverishly her eyes gleamed like stars.

"You have seen him?" cried Mr. Ashley again, in the greatest astonishment. "When? where?"

"A couple of weeks since, and here—here, in this very house!" Mr. Ashley was speechless with surprise.

"The monster had heard in some foreign land that my husband was dead," resumed Mrs. Hillston, speaking with feverish volubility, "and he came to renew his wooing! He had only to mention my children, of course, to secure a hearing. He informed me that my lost ones are still living, and declared that he could place them in my arms at any desired moment. Oh, what a yearning he aroused in my soul for them! I tried to bring him to repentance, but in vain. All the night long I implored him to be merciful, but in vain. For hours and hours I pleaded with him to bring my children back to me, but he refused. And when, at last, in wild despair, I asked him if there were no possible terms upon which he would restore them to me, he smilingly answered in the affirmative."

"Ah, you touched his hard heart at last!" breathed the clergyman, excitedly. "And what terms did he propose?"

"Simply—that I should marry him."

Mr. Ashley recoiled as if he had received a severe blow. His whole frame seemed convulsed with horror.

"Marry him?" he echoed—"marry the man who had done you such irreparable injury? Marry the man whose wickedness had been so deadly to your husband?"

"Those were his terms."

"And you spurned the dastard from your presence?"

"I would have done so, but the thought of my children restrained me," replied Mrs. Hillston, brokenly. "And when he described to me the probable future of my children—the possible blight of their bodies and souls in the sphere into which he had thrust them, a horrible yearning came over me to rescue them from their threatened fate, and—and—oh!—how shall I ever say it?—I consented to his terms."

The revelation was too horrible to be immediately and fully comprehended.

The good clergyman looked as if stunned, sitting motionless and silent.

"And so the miscreant sped away in great glee to bring my children to me," finished Mrs. Hillston, more and more despairingly. "To save them from the horrible gulf into which he has thrust them, I have been false to myself—false to my dead husband—and have

promised my hand to one of the most heartless and remorseless villains that has ever existed! Comprehend, if you can, the whole horror of my situation!"

"But this unholy marriage must never be!" cried the clergyman, arising to his feet and speaking in the tones of a keen indignation. "You must never, never marry that man, my dear Mrs. Hillston—never!"

"Upon no other terms will he bring me my children!"

"But the curse of Heaven would be upon such an unrighteous union!" protested the clergyman, with great earnestness. "You shall not make this horrible sacrifice—never, never!"

Mrs. Hillston wrung her hands silently.

"Yes, I shall marry Runnel," she said, as firmly as sadly. "I shall marry him to rescue my children from the living grave into which he has thrust them. But I will never be his wife, nor will I survive the hour of his shameful victory. In a word, I will sacrifice the remainder of my life for the good of my children; but the hour of my marriage shall be the hour of my death. Such is my decision, and it is to acquaint you with my resolve that I have asked the favor of this visit."

The clergyman stood as if turned to stone, unable to move or speak. He was appalled by the horrible gulf before him.



CHAPTER VII.

FEVER AND DELIRIUM.

To the horror Mr. Ashley had felt at the revelations of Mrs. Hillston, was already added a sense of painful anxiety as to the effect of all these miseries upon her.

"You are ill," he said, abruptly.

"Yes," she assented—"worn out in mind and in body. Heaven only knows what agonies I have endured during all these long years, and especially since I last saw that terrible man!"

She sank back in her chair, white and panting. Save for the burning flush upon her hollow checks, she looked like a corpse. Never in all his saddest experiences had the good clergyman seen a countenance so wan, so woebe-gone and ghastly.

"Something must be done for you at once," he exclaimed, arising. "Permit me."

Stepping to the door of the apartment, he summoned the lady's maid, whom he found in waiting with a look of keen anxiety upon her countenance.

"Take care of your mistress," he enjoined. "I will send for Dr. Moore."

Dispatching the first servant he encountered for the family physician, Mr. Ashley returned to Mrs. Hillston, whom he found in a state of exhaustion approaching a swoon. Her maid had assisted her to a couch, and was

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bathing her head and features with the strongest restoratives at hand.

"How long has she been in this feeble condition?" asked the clergyman of the maid.

"For months, sir," was the answer. "But it is not this utter want of strength alone that now ails her," added the maid, in a whisper corresponding to the clergyman's. "She has a fever!"

The declaration was confirmed by the old physician of the family, who arrived promptly. A look of the gravest concern appeared upon the countenance of the medical gentleman, ere he had finished counting his patient's quick pulse.

"Get her to bed immediately," he commanded, addressing her maid. "She requires prompt treatment. Is her sister-in-law here?"

"No, sir. Mrs. Stevens went north on a visit to her relatives several weeks ago," answered Mrs. Willset. "But there are enough to help me!"

Taking the clergyman by the arm, with the familiarity of an old friend, Dr. Moore drew him away into an adjoining apartment.

"She's a sick woman, Mr. Ashley," declared the physician—" very greatly changed since I last saw her. Why didn't they call me sooner? I have not heard a word about her being ill!"

Mr. Ashley hesitated a moment as to his duty in the premises, and then said:

"Her disease is not merely the result of physical conditions or circumstances, Doctor. She has lately been a prey to great cares and anxieties!"

"Is there any objection to my knowing what these anxieties are?"

"Not the least," replied Mr. Ashley. "The facts have been communicated to me in strict confidence, and

it is under the same condition that I take the liberty of making them known to you, Doctor Moore. As her physician, you are entitled to know, of course, all you have to contend with—everything that may tend to complicate her case. The nature of her anxieties can be briefly stated, since you are already ferfectly familiar with the general facts of her sad history."

The case was at once stated, briefly but clearly. The anxiety of Dr. Moore deepened visibly with every word of the sad revelation.

"You are sure the man Runnel has been here?" was the physician's first question, when the clergyman had finished.

"Certainly he has been here. His late presence is not a figment of a diseased mind, as I was for an instant tempted to believe."

"And her promise to marry the infernal rascal—that is a fact also?"

"Beyond question."

The physician's brow become doubly corrugated—with anger and increased anxiety.

"Poor thing!" he sighed. "How she must have suffered! I fear she is going to have brain fever."

Mrs. Willsett looked anxiously out at this juncture at the doctor, who responded to the silent appeal.

"I will wait here for a further word from you, Doctor, in regard to her condition," observed the clergyman. "Perhaps you will be able to break up her fever—to change everything at once for the better."

It was some time before Dr. Moore rejoined the clergyman, and when he did appear his countenance was graver than ever.

"She is in a critical state, Mr. Ashley," he communicated in a guarded tone. "It is curious—singular, even extraordinary—to observe how people keep their ills

from their physician. Here is a lady who has been slowly dying for weeks and months, and not once has she sent for me. She has had no appetite, and has consequently ate next to nothing. She has been greatly disturbed mentally, and hence has not slept. Gloomy, despairing, and utterly wretched, she has kept herself rigidly within doors, taking neither air nor exercise. And yet, while patients go on in this way, they wonder why the doctor, called at the eleventh hour, is not able to save them."

"You think Mrs. Hillston is really in danger, then?"

"She certainly is, but I do not by any means despair of setting things to rights. I have a great auxiliary in her strong desire to see her children—to assure their future—to right the dreadful wrong of which they have been the victims. Go and see her a few moments. She has a few more words to say to you. I will wait for you, and set you down by the way."

The eyes of Mrs. Hillston were looking eagerly for the clergyman, as he again presented himself in her presence. She smiled sadly, as he advanced to her bedside, taking her extended hand.

"Our interview was hardly finished," she murmured, "and yet I hardly know what I would say further. Perhaps you will think it was foolish and weak of me to promise to marry Runnel—"

The good pastor interrupted her with a gesture.

"It is not for me to judge you," he said, "and still less to blame!"

He had already asked himself if she had done right in making such terms with her life-long enemy for the restoration of her children, but had not been able to reach a satisfactory answer.

On the one hand, it was impossible to think without horror of her union with Runnel; but, on the other hand, has not a mother the holy right of sacrificing herself for her loved ones?

The unhappy lady seemed to divine the reflections of her visitor.

"I need not enter upon any defence of myself, I am sure," she murmured. "Even if I have erred, your kind heart will excuse me. But I will say that I have endeavored to act right in the premises. I saw my children consigned to abysses as dark as the grave—such dreadful abysses! You will readily comprehend to what depths such a man as Runnel can descend in a work of revenge. I saw my innocent girl the victim of this man's wicked machinations, and my boy equally debased and brutalized—the one, perhaps, a criminal and the other an outcast!"

The clergyman pressed with tender sympathy the hand he still held.

"I can well comprehend your action," he declared.

"But you did not give your promise to that terrible being, without well defined and well understood conditions?"

"Certainly not. Not until he has brought me face to face with my loved ones can he ask me to marry him!"

"So far good," breathed Mr. Ashley. "All may yet be well with you. If you had thought to put detectives on Runnel's track, when he left you, and so traced him to the obscurity in which he is retaining the children—"

"I did think of this," interrupted Mrs. Hillston, sadly. "I had the villain watched and followed. But here is the result!"

She drew a crumpled and tear-stained paper from her bosom and passed it to the clergyman, who read it. It was dated at Norfolk, and contained only a line or two. It was to the effect that the detective had traced his

man easily enough to Norfolk, but that at that city all trace of him had been lost.

"And so I haven't the least clue to the whereabouts of my children," said Mrs. Hillston, weeping silently. "They may be somewhere at the north, or they may be upon some island in the Atlantic—within a few hundred miles of me, or thousands of miles from me."

The clergyman heaved a sigh that came from the depths of his soul.

"The dilemma in which you are placed is a most horrible one," he murmured. "Do you really believe that your children are alive?"

"Yes. It was impossible for me to doubt Runnel's affirmations on the subject."

"Do you believe that you will recognize them beyond all question?"

"I will trust my heart for that."

"I ask only because the destroyer of your peace may seek to impose upon you," continued Mr. Ashley, thoughtfully. "It is quite possible—after all these years—that your own children are dead, in which case, with the incentive you have given him, this man may produce a couple in their stead."

"He is capable of such an act, of course," admitted Mrs. Hillston. "But I shall not be the dupe of any such imposture, should he attempt it. As young as my children were when they were stolen, I am sure to know them."

"You will, of course, be very cautious in all your. dealings with this man," said the clergyman, gravely. "When do you expect to see him again?"

"Within a few days, according to his representations—possibly before the end of the week."

Mr. Ashley was silent a few moments, reflecting earnestly, and then he said:

"The revelations you have made to me have filled me with amazement. I am at a loss for the moment what to think or say, and must have time to review the whole matter thoroughly and prayerfully. Do not be rash or despairing. As dark as is your lot, there is one unfailing light at your service, and to that I earnestly recommend you. Try to get a good night's rest, and if you are not too feverish and exhausted, I will take counsel with you in the course of to-morrow. Above all, if Runnel should appear, do not see him alone, and do not take the least action with him or in reference to him until you have talked with me further. Heaven be with you, my dear madam, and may your strength from above correspond to your heavy afflictions."

Joining the unhappy lady in a brief prayer, the reverend gentleman added a few further counsels and took his departure in company with Dr. Moore. Both went away in a reverie as sad as it was profound, and not without a keen anxiety respecting the wild-eyed lady behind them, but little did they imagine the utter terror and despair—the utter physical prostration even—of which she was already the victim.

"I hope I am not going to be ill, Mrs. Willset," was the first observation she made after the clergyman's withdrawal.

"You are ill already, madam," returned the maid, sadly and anxiously. "You must give over this worrying—take the medicine the doctor has left you—and try to get to sleep. The first step toward doing anything for yourself or anybody else is to break up this fever."

"I will do whatever you tell me," declared the patient.
"Where is the medicine?"

The dose was duly swallowed, and its effects as duly realized, the sufferer sinking into one of those profound slumbers which only exhaustion can cause.

For a long time Mrs. Willset watched her mistress contentedly, giving her every care and attention, and endeavoring to believe that the night would produce a great change for the better. During several nights previous the rest of the maid had been more or less broken, and it was no wonder, therefore, that she herself fell asleep in the still hours of the night when everything had become quiet throughout the house. How long she slept she did not know, but when she at last roused herself she at once conceived the impression, from the silence around her, that something was wrong. Springing to the side of the bed in which she had left her mistress reposing, she saw at a glance that it was empty—that she alone was in possession of the apartment—in a word, that Mrs. Hillston was gone!

The shrieks with which the terrified woman alarmed the household can be imagined.

"She's gone!" was the first coherent declaration of Mrs. Willset, whose grief was terrible to witness. "Oh! how can I ever forgive myself? I did not intend to fall asleep, but I did, and the poor lady has become worse while I slept and wandered off in her delirium."

"Her clothes are gone," cried another of the servants.

"She dressed herself, it seems."

"And she must have been gone quite a while," said a third, feeling where Mrs. Hillston had been lying. "The bed is as cold as a stone."

"I must have seen her when she left," exclaimed the butler, arriving upon the scene. "I saw a woman closely wrapped up going out of the side door about an hour ago, and supposed her to be one of the neighbors who had been watching or had dropped in for inquiries."

"An hour ago!" gasped Mrs. Willset. "Then where is she now?"

[&]quot;Heaven only knows!" answered one.

In an instant all was bustle and excitement, as well as anxiety and confusion.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SALEM TRADER.

There are only two famous Salems.

The one is known only through its king, Melchisedek, who seems to have been an extraordinary personage, and to have had some very curious dealings with the patriarch Abraham. We could say a great deal about Melchisedek, about whom little is known, and still more about his royal city of Salem, about which we know absolutely nothing; but we content ourselves by referring to what Moses and St. Paul have said directly on the one subject, or have indirectly suggested on the other.

The other Salem has two great claims to attention—its "witchcraft" and its commerce.

The merchants in this latter Salem are too numerous to be counted, and they are nearly all engaged or interested in "going down to the sea in ships."

For many years the city of Salem sent more ships to the west coast of Africa than any other port in America —more even than New York and Boston put together.

Prominent among the illustrious commanders of the port of Salem, at the date of our narrative, was Captain Jabez Strong.

Ask any one in Salem who Captain Jabez Strong was

[&]quot;She may have drowned herself!" declared another.

[&]quot;Quick! we must search for her?" cried a third.

and what he did, and the answer will invariably be that your respondent never heard of him before, and don't know anything about him. The reason why the inhabitants of Salem will give you this answer is very simple; at the request of the captain himself, we have substituted for his real name a fictitious one. Had we given his real name, the reader would pack his carpet-bag and take the next train for Salem, and leave our story unread, so much more charming would be a personal interview with this famous navigator than any second-hand version of his wonderful adventures. As the captain can't be subjected to such a general visitation, however, and especially as we have our own little interests to consider, we shall proceed in this business exactly as we have begun it.

Be it known, therefore, that upon a certain fine morning in a certain pleasant month, and less than a thousand years ago, the brig *Bunting*, Captain Jabez Strong, took her departure from the ancient and renowned port of Salem, with a fine breeze, to which every inch of the brig's canvas had been spread, including royals and studding-sails, and with just enough life in the sea for its surface to look fresh and lively.

The crew of the brig comprised ten or twelve persons, beginning with the commander and finishing with a diminutive specimen of African ebony, who officiated as cabin boy.

There were the usual sailors, steward and cook, of whom little need be said. They were average specimens of their kind, some of them wicked and vicious, and some good-hearted and careless, indifferent to advancement, content with their shiftlessness, and having no other ambition than to get along easily with the captain. A ship's crew is always a ship's crew, and nothing but a ship's crew, and when you have seen one you

have seen all that ever existed or ever will exist, from the days of Admiral Noah down to the crews of the Kamschatkaian war-vessels, which, in due course of the ages, will sail over the site of North America, when our boasted Western continent shall have gone back into the depths of the ocean.

The only two persons aboard of the brig who merit an especial notice were Captain Strong and Mr. Medlar, his chief mate, and concerning these two men we shall give every needful information, as fast as the woof and warp of their histories shall be woven.

We will merely mention in this place that these two men presented a total contrast—the one being all goodness and honor, and the other a detestable villain.

The voyage upon which the Bunting thus set forth was at least her twentieth.

There is always something exhilarating in getting a good start, especially if one is racing horses or making a sea voyage, and the general sentiment aboard of the stanch brig *Bunting*, as she went bounding out of port, was one of keen satisfaction and enjoyment.

Captain Strong was particularly delighted.

"If we could keep this up about twenty days," he ejaculated, just as the headlands of Gloucester were fading out of sight behind him, "we would make a famous voyage."

Mr. Medlar made some civil response, but there was a snaky gleam in his eyes which would have puzzled an observer, as he turned away to some unimportant duty.

"It'll be the *last* voyage of the old fellow, I'm thinking," he whispered to a bull-necked and dark-faced seaman who had been hovering near him all the morning. "As to its being a *quick* voyage, Rodding, or a 'famous' one, that is his look-out."

"He don't seem to have any suspicions, mate,"

returned Rodding, exchanging with the executive a smile of sinister meaning.

"Certainly not. Your honest man is generally an easy prey. Judging others by himself, his judgment is the greatest of errors and absurdities."

For several hours the brig stood dashingly on her course to the eastward without the occurrence of any unusual event, but about the middle of the forenoon Rodding reported to Medlar that he had seen a curious object upon the brig's bow and a couple of miles distant.

"Looks like a small craft bottom upwards," added Rodding, "but it may be a whale."

The executive produced his glass and turned it in the direction indicated.

- "It is a boat bottom upwards," he declared, in a low tone, as he lowered his glass and shut it up, "and there is a person, or some persons, upon it. Hush! not a word."
 - "Won't you report the discovery?"
- "No. Why should we crowd ourselves with shipwrecked sailors? Let'em take care of themselves."
- "But there can't be more than two or three of them, to judge by the size of the boat."
- "There would be two or three too many. We shall have trouble enough without adding to the number of our enemies. Let 'em take care of themselves, Rodding. We can't be bothered with 'em."

And with this the mate walked away, giving his attention to some trifling matter connected with the discipline of the deck.

"A wreck ahead, Cap'n Strong!" suddenly called a sailor on duty near the commander, who, seated in the shadow of his main-sail, had been looking over a manifest of his cargo, of which he was the principal owner.

Some sort of a wreck, Cap'n, about six points to the leeward."

In an instant Captain Strong was upon his feet and all attention.

"Bring me my glass, Cuddle," he ordered.

The diminutive African was not more than five seconds in placing the instrument in the captain's hands.

"Why, it's a little shore-fisher bottom side up," ejaculated Capt. Strong, after looking at the object a few moments. "It's exactly in the direction Medlar was looking a minute ago! Didn't you see it, Mr. Medlar?"

" No, sir!"

"Then what were you looking at?"

"I—I thought I saw something," stammered the executive, becoming as red as a lobster, "but I couldn't find it!"

"Couldn't find it!" echoed the commander, in astonishment. "I don't see how you could avoid seeing the wreck. It's as plainly to be seen as the nose on your face. Run down to it, Mr. Medlar, and we'll see what it is!"

It was with a very ill grace that the executive gave the necessary order.

In the course of a few minutes Capt. Strong was able to make out the wreck distinctly.

"It's a mere cockle-shell," he muttered. "I see only two persons upon it—a boy and a girl!"

The interest with which the good captain neared the wreck, after discovering the young couple, kept him almost speechless.

"A strange craft!" was his ejaculation, as soon as the brig was hove to near the wreck. "And a strange pair to be in that predicament! Out with a boat at once,

Mr. Medlar—and allow me to add that you are singularly slow this morning!"

There was a touch of fire in the quiet reproof that produced an instant change in the bearing of the executive. A boat was instantly lowered, the wreck visited, and the young couple taken from it and conveyed to the *Bunting*. The girl was unconscious—the boy so exhausted that he could not articulate a syllable—but he was clinging to the insensible girl with such tenacity that actual force was necessary to detach his cramped fingers from her.

"Well, here's a curious affair!" exclaimed Captain Strong, as soon as he had taken a rapid survey of the rescued couple. "Bring the boy into the cabin!"

Saying this, he led the way thither with the unconscious girl, bearing her in his arms with a tenderness that seemed paternal.

"A queer wreck!" commented Medlar, as he gave orders for the resumption of the brig's course. "Looks like a sort of life-boat!"

"She is a life-boat, mate!" returned Rodding. "Didn't you see the rope running around her under her gunwale, and to which the boy was clinging?"

From the boat itself, the speculations of the two men were promptly transferred to the young couple who had been taken from it.

"You may laugh at me, Rodding, but I am annoyed at this whole business!"

"You are foolish enough, then. What harm can come of a couple of children?"

"I don't see any harm yet; but as a gnat can tease an elephant, it is quite possible that the young couple will be in our way."

Rodding smiled as grimly as contemptuously.

"Even in that case it won't be a great deal of trouble to get rid of them," he said. "A gnat can tease an elephant, to be sure, but a gnat is readily killed!"

In the meantime, Captain Strong was devoting himself to the restoration of the young couple, seconded by Cuddle and two or three of the best-hearted sailors aboard of the *Bunting*, and it was not long before they began to revive, throwing off the deadly chill with which they had been seized, and slowly regaining the strength which had been so well-nigh exhausted.

"Perhaps you will soon be able to tell us who you are, my lad," said the kind-hearted commander, when the eyes of the boy had intelligently taken in the scene around him.

"Yes, sir," was the boy's answer, as he looked up, with an air of joyous relief, from the pale features of his companion, who was giving numerous signs of her speedy restoration to consciousness. "We are Arty and Elgie—"

An amused smile flitted across every face, including the countenence of the commander.

"Arty and Elgie Seaborn!" finished the lad, making a violent effort.

The couple thus rescued in the last stages of exhaustion, were indeed our young hero and heroine, who had drifted during the forenoon exactly into the track of the *Bunting*.

The names articulated with such difficulty by the youth did not signify a great deal of course, to any of the hearers, none of them having heard them before. But every one present was struck by the noble and intelligent bearing of the lad, and by the gentle, refined beauty of the girl.

"Take this, my lad," said Captain Strong, proffering a rare cordial.

The boy took the dose in silence.

"You will soon be able to tell us who you are," continued the commander.

"I-I can do that now, sir!"

He proceeded to do so, not without a great deal of painful effort, and not without frequent pauses to look after his companion.

"And now to tell us how you came in such an awful fix," suggested Captain Strong.

Ever cautious and thoughtful, Arty raised himself upon one elbow—for he had been laid upon the floor of the cabin—and turned a keen look of inquiry upon the commander.

"Who are you, sir?" he then asked.

The captain smiled indulgently, and hastened to make himself and his vessel known to our hero.

- "And whither are you bound, sir?" pursued the lad.
- "To the west coast of Africa!"
- "But won't you turn back, sir?"
- "What should I turn back for?" asked Captain Strong.
- "Why, to land Elgie and me!"
- "No. I can't turn back in such a breeze as this, my lad—"
 - "Not even if-"

He hesitated, with a visible tremor of apprehension.

"Not even to relieve the anxiety of your parents, who doubtless believe you to be dead," declared Captain Strong. "You will have to go with me to the west coast of Africa!"

The hearty joy and relief with which Arty clasped the hand of the commander at this assurance, surprised that worthy greatly.

"Oh, I am so glad!" cried the boy.

"And I," piped up a shrill, quavering voice, that caused about as much excitement in the little crowd as would have been produced by the fall of a bomb-shell.

This last speaker, of course, was Elgie.

She had recovered her senses.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Capt. Strong, delightedly, as he petted the curly head of the little maiden. "So you are around, are you? How do you feel?"

"First-rate, sir. Happy as I can be, sir." after she had taken one good look into the honest eyes of the commander. "But, oh, so very, very tired!"

"Naturally enough, my little dear, after what you have been through," commented Capt. Strong. "Take a little dose of this, my dear, as your brother has just done, and it will do you ever so much good, I assure you."

The girl swallowed the cordial, and then nestled herself in the wrappings with which the thoughtful commander had supplied her.

"And now Arty is going to tell us how you and he came to be in such a fix," resumed Capt. Strong. "We are very curious to know how it happened. What can two such young folks as you have been doing with that boat?"

"We were running away, sir," declared Arty, with earnest directness.

"Running away?" echoed the commander. "Good gracious! What next?"

"The boat was running away with us, I mean," amended Arty, after encountering a warning look from Elgie. "We went to sleep in the boat, and she broke adrift in the night, and— But I'll begin at the beginning, sir, and tell you how it all happened."

Confirmed in this resolve by another look from Elgie, he took up their mutual life-history at its earliest commencement, as far as known to them, and briefly narrated the events with which their young lives had been enlivened. What a very curious narrative it seemed to all the hearers!

"I have told you all these things, sir," finished the boy, "because you look so kind and good, and because you have promised to take us with you to the coast of Africa."

"Your confidence in me is not misplaced, my lad," said Capt. Strong, with grave interest. "I must take you to Africa, of course. Unless we should meet a ship in which you can go back—"

"Oh, we don't wish to go back, sir," Arty hastened to declare.

"In that case you can remain where you are as long as you please. Everything aboard this brig is at your service, and everybody, including its commander, and all you have to do is to rest and take comfort."

A long sigh of relief came from the young couple in concert.

"How good you are, sir," murmured Arty.

"Just as good as you can be, sir," supplemented Elgie, as one of her little hands clasped the great, shaggy paw of the old sea-dog. "Arty and I will be perfectly happy with you, sir, and we shall both soon be big enough and strong enough to pay our way."

The captain laughed at this assurance.

"In the meantime," he said, "I am ready to take you both upon trust. "Here, my little dear," and he threw open the door of a state-room, "is a room you can have all to yourself, and I have lots of silks and laces, and things that you can make up and wear, and fit yourself up just like any princess. And here, young man," he added, turning to the boy, as he opened the door of a second stateroom, "is an establishment of which you can have instant possession!"

The young couple embraced the great-hearted com-

mander in concert and then embraced each other. They were already at home upon the great waters.

But at that instant Medlar and his familiar turned away from the entrance of the cabin, with angry and sneering expressions upon their repulsive features.

"It's a pity to spoil that touching little romance down there!" muttered Medlar, "but we shall have to spoil it!"

And thus, while all was bright and smiling immediately around the young couple, a cloud of darkness was gathering above them!

CHAPTER IX.

ARTY AS A CABIN-BOY.

Within a few hours after their timely rescue by the Salem trader, our young hero and heroine were as well as ever, save from the extreme fatigue resulting from their long struggle with wind and wave for their lives.

Their escape had been, in fact, a very narrow one, and would not have been possible but for the exceptional and peculiar character of their boat.

They had been able, at the instant of the boat's capsizing, to secure a firm hold in the stout loops running along its side, and in due course—the wind and sea moderating—had climbed upon the upturned bottom, clinging to the centre-board.

And here they had clung during all the long hours of the morning.

The strength of the girl had given out first, and such a season of terror had taken possession of her, as she found her fingers refusing their office, that she had become unconscious.

What Arty could have done in that horrible situation had it been long continued, it is idle to speculate; but affairs had scarcely reached the sad state indicated, when his feverish glances rested upon a sail that was rapidly approaching.

How well he fought the fight remaining has been already indicated.

About the middle of the following afternoon, when the couple were considerably refreshed and rested, they paid a visit to the deck with Captain Strong, who seemed to become young in showing them through the brig and in answering their numerous questions, and in witnessing their astonishment.

"You don't feel sea-sick at all, then?" was one of his first questions.

"Not a bit, sir," replied Arty, speaking for himself and for Elgie. "What is it to be sea-sick?"

At this question, there was a general laugh from the sailors, who were constantly gathering around the young couple.

"Well, if you don't know what it is," returned Captain Strong, "pray Heaven that you never may! To be sea-sick—really sea-sick—is to throw up everything you have eaten for six months previous and your boots with it!"

"Goodness! how dreadful it must be," commented Elgie, excitedly. "Oh, no, Captain Strong, I was never, never sea-sick!"

"Then you may safely say that you are a sailor, and so may Arty," said the commander. "Perhaps I had better enter you upon the ship's books, and give you regular wages!"

- "Oh, if you only would, sir!" exclaimed our hero, instantly jumping at the chance.
 - "Why, are you serious?" asked Capt Strong.
 - "Certainly, sir-if you are."
 - "Well, what can you do?"
 - "Anything you set me at, sir."
- "And so can I, sir," spoke up Elgie, quickly. "I steered the ship for Arty, and he showed me how."
- "The ship? Oh, you mean the boat we found bottom upwards? Well, is not the fix we found the boat in a great argument against your efficiency in steering, my little woman?"
- "No, sir—not a bit of it. It was not I who upset the boat, but Arty."

The commander turned smilingly to the boy.

- "How is this, my lad?" he asked. "Is your sister doing you full justice?"
- "I am afraid she is, sir. I upset the boat by raising the sail."
- "You did? Well, you needn't look glum about it. I once lost a brig like this on the coast of Morocco, and all by setting sail, Arty. If I had never set sail, that brig would have been in the port of Salem to this day."

Here there was another general laugh from the sailors. Everybody seemed unusually happy—everybody save the first mate, Mr. Medlar, and his familiar, Rodding, who stood apart, looking with ill-concealed contempt and disgust upon the young couple and their new friends.

"In fact, every ship that was ever lost was lost by setting sail," continued Captain Strong, as he patted Arty admiringly upon the head; "so that you need not have the least mortification about the loss of yours."

"I was too anxious to turn back, sir," explained Arty.

"The truth was, sir, we had no provisions."

"And couldn't think of striking out for Guinea without them," laughed the captain. "Add to all those considerations the fact that you were upon your first voyage—"

"Our second, sir," corrected Elgie, gravely.

At this there was another general explosion, everybody aboard of the brig being aware of the nature of the first voyage to which the girl thus made reference—that first fatal voyage in which the young couple had been cast upon the iron-bound coast of Massachusetts.

"In any case, it was a want of experience that cost our young navigator his ship," continued Captain Strong. "All I can say of him is what has been said of many an eminent commander—that his subsequent conduct was most noble and courageous. Living or dead, little girl, he wasn't going to lose you. We had to fairly tear you asunder when we brought you aboard of the *Bunting*."

And here a great tear appeared in each of the eyes of the commander, and quite a shower in the eyes of our hero and our heroine, as they again flew into each other's arms, for about the fortieth time since their rescue, at the recollection of their fearful perils.

"But our prospects being all now fair," resumed Capt. Strong, "I shall be pleased to teach you all I know about navigation or anything else, my boy."

Arty fairly capered in the joyous excitement this declaration caused him.

"Oh, if you will, sir," he cried, "I shall soon be able to make a good living."

"As to that, my boy, I can give you a post now that will bring you all you can eat—and your sister, too, for that matter. Cuddle, here, is only an indifferent cabin-boy, and I will put you in the place he ought to fill, but does not."

"And Cuddle-what'll he do, sir?"

"Why, he can cuddle down in some corner and go to sleep, after filling his bread-basket; and, between you and me, these are two of the principal things he is good for. Make yourself entirely easy about him, however. Even if you become cabin-boy, Cuddle, he will have all the business he can attend to. He is one of the best interpreters I can possibly have in my dealings with this people."

"It is agreed, sir!" cried Arty, joyfully. "I will be cabin-boy from this very minute!"

"Good," commenced Capt. Strong, "and I will give you three dollars a month. As to your sister—"

"Oh, I am going to help the cook, sir," Elgie hastened to say, as she sent an irresistible glance to the heart of that sable functionary. "I need not be any expense at all to Arty. I am sure I can earn my own living, Captain Strong!"

"And so am I, my little dear," said the commander.
"What do you say, Cuffee? Do you want the young lady to help you?"

"Golly! I does, massa. Dat's to say, I want her to come 'round and look on!"

"You don't want her to work, then?"

"Golly, massa, dem han's was never made to clean pots and kettles—"

"Well, there are lots and lots of things I can do," interrupted Elgie, as stoutly as promptly, fearful of finding the path of her ambition closed. "I can sweep and wipe dishes and bring water and tend the fire and take up the ashes and mend stockings and—"

"Jerusalem!" interrupted Captain Strong. "Why, here is an assistant, Cuffee, that we will not be able to get along without another day!"

"Golly, golly, massa!" cried Cuffee, cutting a double shuffle. "Ain't she a smart 'un?"

"It is settled, then!" declared Captain Strong. "Arty is to be cabin boy and his sister is to be—well—housekeeper, or shipkeeper, whichever the keeper's to call herself. And for this service I am to pay her a dollar every month—a whole, round, big, moon dollar—the said arrangement to continue until we all return to Salem. What say you both?"

"It is agreed, sir!" said the young couple in chorus.

"Very well. Clear the deck here, and Cuffee and Cuddle shall dance one of their native tear-arounds in honor of the bargain!"

The dance was duly performed, to the great amazement of the young couple, who had by this time forgotten all about their fatigues.

The thoughtful kindness of Captain Strong, as thus displayed, was continued from day to day to the young couple, as the staunch brig flew on her way across the Atlantic. Both were happy in the posts half-playfully assigned them, and it is but justice to them to say that they were soon among the most consequential personages on the vessel. They were both delighted at the opportunity of earning their living, and especially at the prospect of earning money for themselves, and in their warm and grateful hearts already looked up to Captain Strong as to a father.

Within three days, in fact, Arty had developed such a strong taste for navigation, that the old navigator was never tired of giving him instruction, or of answering the ten thousand questions with which our hero constantly plied him. And as the best sailors on the brig, taking their cue from the commander, lost no opportunity of rendering themselves useful to the boy, he was soon able to reef and steer, to box the compass, to work

out the ordinary business of dead reckoning, to take an observation, and to cipher out all the usual problems and operations of a voyage.

The simple truth was the boy was an apt scholar, his whole soul thirsting after knowledge, because he felt sure that knowledge would assure his own future and that of his companion.

"Perhaps I shall command a ship some day," he said proudly to the girl, when he had taken an observation and established his position with tolerable correctness without the least assistance from Captain Strong. "And when I do, what nice things I will bring you from India and China."

"You forget, Arty, I shall be there with you."

"Why, of course."

As good luck would have it, Captain Strong had brought aboard for this voyage a large chest full of books, including many books of travels and voyages and works of general information, and he was not a little astonished to note the zeal with which his young friends applied themselves to them.

But a greater joy than the perusal of books was one the captain himself was able to afford them, with his long and glowing narratives of the adventures he had experienced and the countries he had visited in the course of his forty years of life upon the ocean.

There was still one other great pleasure Captain Strong was able to give his young friends—that of handling and examining many a rare curiosity he had collected in the course of his long wanderings. His baggage was full of all sorts of shells and cabinets and puzzles and pictures, curious tools and instruments, wonderful textures of cloth and matting, and treasures of nature and art too numerous to mention.

Their nominal duties attended to, the young couple

were in the habit of spending several hours of every day in the store-room thus opened to them, and no greater delight did Captain Strong have than to sit and watch them as they thus rummaged amid his valuable collections.

"What is this, Captain Strong?" asked Arty, one evening, as he stumbled upon an object in one of the captain's berths he had not before noticed.

"That," replied the commander, as he dragged the object out into the cabin, "is a life-preserver—a suit of rubber clothing—that was presented to me by its inventor."

"Did you ever wear it?"

"Never, for two good reasons—it is much too small for me, and I have never been in any position to need it."

"How funny one would look in such a rig as that!" exclaimed Elgie. "Suppose you put it on, Arty, if Captain Strong will let you."

"Oh, you may and welcome!"

Making a great deal of sport with the suit, the boy proceeded to ensconce himself in it, and then blew up the different air chambers in the different garments, making himself look about as large as the renowned Daniel Lambert. Not merely Elgie, but the jolly captain himself laughed till he cried at the remarkable spectacle the lad presented.

"You ought to show yourself to Merrick in that rig," said the commander. "How he would laugh!"

Merrick was an old sailor who had been very kind to the young couple, and had taught the lad the greater portion of his knots and splices.

"I'll show myself to him," returned Arty, quickly, delighted at the thought of the sensation he would cre-

ate in the forecastle. "Excuse me a few moments, Captain Strong. I will soon be back, Elgie."

And with this he slipped from the cabin.

A darker night than that which rested upon the scene as Arty Seaborn thus reached the deck, he had never witnessed, neither moon nor stars being visible, and yet the wind was as fine as the sea was calm.

Arty paid little heed to the darkness, however. His every thought was upon the surprise Merrick would exhibit on seeing him.

Passing swiftly along the deck, the lad was conscious enough of the presence of the watch, but such was the intensity of the darkness that he could not see them. It was, in fact, one of those darknesses to be found only upon the ocean—such darkness as rested upon Egypt, in all probability, when the inhabitants were obliged to feel their way from one room to another.

As familiar as the best of the sailors with every portion of the brig, Arty did not have any difficulty in making his way to the forecastle, into which he descended without the least audible sound, he being barefooted, and without becoming even vaguely visible, there not being any light in the forecastle or upon the deck near him.

Full of the merriment he expected to make, the boy advanced in utter silence to Merrick's berth, and stood motionless near it a moment to suppress the incipient laughter which was threatening to betray his presence. How important was to be that moment—as well as the playful errand by which he was preoccupied—the boy could not have even dimly imagined!



CHAPTER X.

INTO DEADLY PERIL.

The disappearance of Mrs. Hillston from her anxious home, as related in a former chapter, had taken place in the most natural manner, without mystery and without complication.

Stricken with a burning fever, which acted with especial intensity upon the brain, she was not long in awakening from the slumbers into which she had fallen, and when she thus awoke it was with a mind crowded with delirium.

Conscious only of a terrible unrest and oppression—sensitive only to the woes which had for so many long years darkened her existence—she started up abruptly, looking around upon the dimly lighted apartment, upon the motionless figure of her sleeping maid, and upon all the features of the scene of which she was the centre.

"Sombody is ill!" she murmured, with some perception of the nature of her surroundings, but without any just conception of them, her thoughts being in a whirl and a haze. "Why is not the doctor sent for? What is the matter?"

In an instant she was out of bed and hastily dressing. "Strange that there is no one to see to anything," she mused. "Poor thing," she added, with a pitying glance at her sleeping maid. "Poor Mrs. Willset! I suppose she is worn out with all her troubles—as I am."

and she sighed wearily. "Let her sleep. I can go for the doctor myself."

It is impossible to follow exactly the train of thought pursued by the afflicted lady, if indeed there was any sequence in her sentiments, or any relevancy between her impressions and her acts. It is likely that she was for a moment entirely oblivious of her own personality, and was only vaguely conscious that something was wrong. Be that as it may, she dressed herself quickly and in silence, enveloped herself in a water-proof cloak, and stole noiselessly from the dwelling.

The direction she took at first was that leading to the residence of Mr. Moore, and it is probable that the intention of summoning him was more or less defined in her mind. But long ere she reached the neighborhood of the physician's house, she found herself at the cross-road leading to the cemetery in which her husband was buried, and this circumstance diverted all her thoughts into a new channel.

"It is there that he is reposing!" she murmured aloud, as she started violently. "And in this dark night, too! Oh, why does he not come home? I must find him! I must find him!"

Turning into the cross-road, she hurried in the direction of the distant cemetery, with a speed with which only her wild delirium could have endowed her weak frame at a moment of such profound exhaustion.

Panting, tottering at every step, she finally reached her husband's grave, and sank down upon the broad stone with which it was covered, moaning and wringing her hands and looking as eagerly as wildly around.

"Where are you, Abner?" she called. "Oh, come to me! Come to me! Where are you?"

The words had scarcely left her lips when she started to her feet as if electrified, and stood staring into the chill night air, with a countenance expressive of astonished ecstacy.

It was evident that she thought she beheld her husband before her.

"Oh! why do you not come to me?" she cried reproachfully, as she extended her arms. "Why have you been away from me so long? Am I not your own wife? Oh! speak to me! Speak to me!"

An instant she stood thus staring into vacancy, and then she dropped heavily upon the cold sward.

The vision of her delirium had vanished.

Groaning and weeping she rocked herself to and fro, still wringing her hands.

"Not one word!" she gasped. "He is angry! He knows that I am a weak and perjured creature. He knows that Runnel has been here—his deadly enemy. He knows that I have promised to be Runnel's wife if the children are restored to me! And his curse is upon me!"

To have judged by the convulsions of grief that agitated her at that moment, one would have thought that she was about to die.

For several minutes she raved wildly, explaining the motives which had influenced her in her dealings with Runnel, and then, sinking into a despairing silence, she gathered herself slowly upon her feet.

How like a spirit she looked amid the grim shadows! She stood like a statue several minutes. The incubus of an indescribable despair was evidently upon her.

Then she tottered away in the direction from which she had come, soon emerging from the cemetery into the road. One of her hands was clutched tightly to her breast, the other pressed convulsively her burning forehead.

"Yes, yes!" she suddenly broke out, in the wildest

agony, as she staggered on without any consciousness of her course. "Abner is angry with me. He will not speak to me. He has hidden himself in the darkness. He knows that Runnel is coming back again! Oh! I shall never see my husband again—never, never!"

An instant she hushed her wild sobs, pausing and looking around as if yet hoping to hear or see her husband, and then she tottered on again.

As a natural sequence to the thought that she had been abondoned by her husband, soon came the fear that she was pursued by Runnel.

A wild fright took possession of her, as was indicated by the glances she cast over her shoulder, and by her quickened footsteps.

"That wicked man is coming," she ejaculated. "He means to hold me to my promise! Oh! he is pursuing me! Whichever way I turn, I see him! How can I escape him? Oh, who will help me?"

Breaking into an unsteady but rapid run, as these frenzied wails came from her lips, she turned into King street, at its intersection with Meeting, and took her way toward the city, not pausing in her flight until she was abreast of Washington Race Course. Here, between Grove and Moultrie streets, she almost came to a halt, looking wildly around; and especially in the direction from which she had come. Her aspect was that of one who considers herself pursued, and who is merely gaining breath for the renewal of a terrible chase.

In good truth, the poor woman was now dominated by the thought that Runnel was pursuing her, and her whole soul was absorbed by the supposed necessity of making her escape.

As ill-fortune would have it, a belated and half-inebriated individual, who had probably been honoring some convivial party with his presence, came along Moultrie

street just as Mrs. Hillston was crossing it, and catching sight of her, hailed her with a rude joviality and curiosity. A fact of this kind sufficed to lend an air of the grimmest reality to all the illusions under which she was laboring.

"There he is again!" was the gasping cry that came from her.

A prey to this terrifying conviction, the hapless lady bounded away again, and at a rate of speed that soon left her brawling tormentor out of sight and hearing behind her. Her course still lay directly toward the city, past Huger and the other lonely streets adjacent—not that she had any fixed destination in her mind, but only that she was trying to distance her supposed pursuer.

She hurried on in this wild flight until abreast of the orphan asylum and the citadel, until all trace of the belated inebriate had been lost, and until her unnatural strength was well-nigh exhausted. She was now within the thickly settled portion of the city, but at that late hour not a soul was abroad in the vicinity save the official guardians of the night.

Seating herself in an obscure door-way, the poor lady remained motionless several minutes, recovering her breath and looking out with wild eyes upon the few signs of life around her.

And then she was off again, still going she knew not whither.

She had not gone far, however, after those few moments of rest, when she chanced to pass a low tippling place, the door of which was open, and in front of which stood several half-tipsy young men who were in the act of taking a maudlin leave of one another.

"See here, boys!" cried one of them, as he indicated

Mrs. Hillston. "Who is this? The witch of Endor or some fairer witch? Suppose we see!"

"Ten dollars that you dare not kiss her," returned a coward, "and twenty dollars that you cannot!"

"Done, in both cases," said the former speaker, with a coarse laugh. "You'll see how easy it is to earn thirty dollars, and at the same time make the acquaintance of a pretty woman!"

A general laugh greeted this sally, and was followed by ironical cheers, as the taker of the two bets set about winning them. But he had not taken half a dozen swift steps toward Mrs Hillston, when she bounded away like the wind, more frightened than ever.

"Go it, Lally," called the hair-brained young fellow who had proposed the bets. "If you win my money I'll enter you for the next sweepstakes and go my pile upon you."

Heedless of this bantering, the man addressed as Lally exerted himself to the utmost in the race upon which he had entered. What was his astonishment to find that he did not gain a step upon the fugitive!

"Who can she be?" was naturally his next thought.

"And what is she out for at such a late hour?"

Piqued and curious, he held to the pursuit until his flaccid and untrained limbs gave out, and then he came to a halt, just in time to see the flying figure he had been pursuing disappear around a distant corner.

If the young reprobate had failed to win his bets however, he had not failed to throw Mrs. Hillston into the deepest terror. She did not cease her flight at the cessation of the pursuit, but held on, panting and wild-eyed, hastening nearer and nearer to the Ashley river. Perhaps some light attracted her in that direction, or perhaps her movements were governed by the profound silence reigning in that quarter. She was soon upon

one of the wharves between Bennet's Mill Pond and Chisholm's Mills; and here, panting and utterly exhausted of even her unnatural strength, she sank down upon a pile of boards in a state approaching unconsciousness as well as in a feverish delirium.

She had remained in this position only a few minutes when a policeman who had witnessed her advent upon the wharf slowly approached her, with many a curious and insolent glance.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded, roughly. "Who are you?"

It was several minutes before he could secure the recognition of his presence, but with the returning strength of the poor fugitive came back a perception of her surroundings.

"Who are you, I say?" repeated the policeman, choking her roughly. "What are you doing here? Speak."

Mrs. Hillston stared at the man in speechless terror. Perhaps she took him for Runnel in disguise, or for merely an emissary of her enemy. Be that as it may, she screamed loudly as she felt the rude hand of the coarse official upon her.

"I dare say I have seen you before, old girl. You've been treated once or twice too much, I suppose. No airs now, mind you, or I'll take you to the calaboose!"

A horror of the man and his words was inevitable. In an instant Mrs. Hillston had regained her feet, and entered upon another wild and swift flight.

"Oh, that won't work, my lady!" exclaimed the policeman, as he bounded after the fugitive. "I'll know what you are doing here at this hour of the night. I'll arrest you!"

Familiar with all the intricacies of the place, and

being as agile as strong, he soon cut off the flight of the fugitive shoreward, turning her back.

"I have you now," he cried exultingly, as she bounded along the wharf in the direction of the river. "You may as well give up the attempt. It will be all the worse for you if you make me any more trouble."

Seeing that no attention was given these remarks, he bent every energy in the pursuit, expecting the fugitive to halt, but he was soon horrified to note that she did not seem to be aware that she was nearing the end of the wharf.

"Hold on there!" he shouted, in the sharp accents of a sudden terror. "You'll be in the river in a moment more!"

He spoke too late!

Even as his words were still resounding in the air, there was a sudden splash just before him, and he found himself alone upon the edge of the wharf!

Taken possession of by the swift current of the river, Mrs. Hillston was swept rapidly away, still splashing and struggling.

"I'm no swimmer!" muttered the policeman, recoiling.
"And no boat is near!"

He sent a swift glance around. No one was in sight. The tragic event of the moment seemed to have had no witnesses.

"As well let her slide!" muttered the officer. "I shall be dismissed the force if she is saved; and perhaps treated to a worse dose, as I was chasing her at the moment of the accident. I'll slip back to my post and keep silent, the more readily as she is doubtless beyond help!"

He lost no time in acting upon this resolution, and did not so much as look again at that still struggling figure as it was borne away by the river's current!



CHAPTER XI.

MRS. HILLSTON'S PRESERVATION.

The peril of Mrs. Hillston had been noted notwithstanding the opinion to the contrary of the policeman who had been so instrumental in causing it.

Just below the wharf from which the delirious lady had leaped in her terror—at the wharf next above Chisholm's Mills, in fact—a middle-aged man, in the garb of a seaman, had lowered himself into a small boat a few moments previous to the "accident," and was making his preparations to push off to a large Baltimore clipper which lay anchored on the west side of the channel almost abreast of him.

The wild screams of Mrs. Hillston, as she fled from the policeman, having reached the ears of the man in the boat, he leaped upon the wharf in time to note the catastrophe that immediately followed, the distance between him and the scene of trouble being inconsiderable, and the adjacent lamps giving him a good view of his surroundings.

The amazement of this man, as he watched the hesitation of the policeman to raise an alarm or to go to the lady's rescue, was exceeded only by his disgust at the official's villainous flight.

"The infernal coward!" exclaimed the astonished watcher. "What does he mean by that conduct? Is he really going to leave the woman to drown?"

While asking himself these questions the seaman sprang into his boat and pushed off to the rescue, rowing with a skill and vigor which proved him to be an accomplished oarsman. As the current was every instant bringing Mrs. Hillston down the river, while the boat was swiftly descending it, the rescuer was promptly beside the object of his zealous efforts, and the next instant thereafter, the half-drowned lady was drawn into the boat, quite unconscious.

The point where this timely rescue was effected was so far from the shore and from all the street-lamps, that the proceedings of the rescuer would not have been noticed in the darkness had the wharves been covered with people.

But, as a further assurance of secresy, a glance of the seaman along the line of the wharves assured him that not a soul was within range of his vision.

For a few moments he hesitated as to his course, and then he laid the insensible lady in the bottom of the boat and seized the oars, rowing vigorously toward the clipper already mentioned, whose outlines were barely visible, but whose position was perfectly indicated by its lights.

The row was a considerable one, alike in point of time and of exertion, the boat having drifted quite a distance down stream, and the current being strong; but the solitary oarsman was soon under the bows of the clipper, and clinging to the tautened chain of its upstream anchor.

"Throw me a rope, Awker!" called the seaman.

There was no response.

"Do you hear there?" shouted the oarsman, sharply, he having no little difficulty to maintain his position against the rushing tide. "Are you asleep as usual? Throw me a rope!"

A man had appeared on the forecastle, and a rope was instantly lowered.

"All right," called the man in the boat, whose air, no less than his garb, attested that he was an officer aboard of the clipper. "I have it. Make fast and hold hard."

Everything was soon secured, and the boat, with its living freight, was moored safely under the clipper's bows.

"And now send down another rope," called the officer to his man, as the latter peered over the side. "There's a basket to come up?"

"Aye, aye, sir!"

The rope being duly lowered, the officer made the unconscious lady fast to it.

"Haul away!" he then commanded—"haul away, but be careful not to upset the basket."

The man hauled accordingly, giving expression to his wonderment in constant growls and exclamations.

"A singular basket, that, Mr. Gredin!" he cried, as the lady's form neared him. "Sakes alive! if it isn't a woman!" and he toiled with all his might. "How wonderful!"

"Steady!" called Mr. Gredin from below. "If you so much as tear a ruffle, I'll threw you overboard, Awker! So, there you are!"

The lady had indeed reached the deck of the clipper in safety.

"And now give me a chance at that same rope!" called the officer.

The rope was lowered again. No sooner had it reached Mr. Gredin than he seized it, and went up the side as rapidly as a spider.

"Bring the lady into the cabin," he then commanded, with quick intonations. "You have a light burning!"

"Always, sir-according to orders!"

- "And was you on the look-out for me, too—'according to orders?" sneered Gredin.
- "No, sir. I had given up expecting you, and was about to turn in!"
- "Is anybody aboard with you—any of your infernal chums?"
 - " No, sir !"
 - "I am glad of that. Steady!"

Thus talking by the way, the two men transported Mrs. Hillston between them to the cabin, where they laid her upon a sofa and covered her with a couple of blankets.

- "Good heavens!" ejaculated Gredin, the instant the cabin lamp gleamed full upon the pale features of the rescued lady. "Heavenly king! if she isn't Mrs. Hillston!"
- "Mrs. Hillston?" echoed Awker, who was a bony, formidable-looking personage, at least six feet in height. "The Mrs. Hillston Cap'n Runnel went to see lately?"
- "The very one! You will remember that I pointed her out to you in the streets of Charleston afterwards! She is that same Mrs. Hillston, Awker! It's strange how she came in such a fix as this!"

For a moment he stood motionless, in a sort of stupor of amazement.

- "And strange that I have the good fortune to be her rescuer!" resumed Gredin, with a thrill of joy in his voice. "It's the luck of a life-time crowded into a moment."
- "She is wet as a rag," cjaculated Awker, whose astonishment seemed to have become chronic. "She has been in the water!"
- "'And thereby hangs a tale,' Awker," said Gredin, with ill-concealed excitement. "But actions, not words,

is what is now required by me. We must have a doctor immediately."

"You'll have a good time in getting one aboard of the ship at this hour of the night," said Awker. "Why did you bring the lady here?"

"Because—because my good luck was with me for once," returned Gredin. "But don't ask me any questions. Answer me a few, and as quickly as possible. Do you suppose you can bring me a doctor within thirty minutes?"

"And if I could, do you want that doctor to know your secret—that the lady is here?"

"True. What am I thinking of? But don't you know some old negro woman or man who has some notion of medicine—"

"Hold!" interrupted Awker, excitedly. "The very thing! An old negress called Maum Blacky—a sort of witch and fortune-teller, who nominally belongs to the Rhett estate, but who is in reality as independent as you or I, she being too unearthly for anybody to be too intimate with."

"And where is she?"

"In Lynch street, hardly a stone's throw from the river."

"Could you stir her up readily at such an hour?" pursued Gredin, anxiously, as he looked at his watch.

"Certainly. It's the best hour in which to find her the very hour in which the worst class of her customers usually put in an appearance."

"And this old creature, you say, is a doctress as well as a fortune-teller?"

"Doctress or demon—I don't know which," replied Awker. "The essential is, she performs some very remarkable cures, and has performed several to my own personal knowledge." "Then go for her at once, Awker," cried Gredin, with deep excitement. "Bring her aboard as soon as you can. Do not take no for an answer. Kidnap the old sorceress if necessary. Some of the boys are at Black Ralph's, and will lend you a helping hand if you should have to resort to stern measures to make her consent to coming."

"Oh, the chink of gold would induce her to enter tophet!" declared Awker. "Besides, she knows me. You can depend upon seeing her immediately."

"Be off, then, like lightning."

Awker hastily left the clipper, making use of the boat so lately employed by Greden.

"A glorious streak of luck!" exclaimed the latter, as he took a hasty turn in the cabin. "There is no doubt about the lady's identity. Won't the captain be tickled!"

A moan from the half-drowned lady called her rescuer to her side. Her large, wild eyes opened in terror upon him.

"You are safe, madame," he said, with his politest bow and most reassuring voice.

"Oh! where am I!" she cried, wildly. "What has happened?"

"You fell into the river, madam," explained Gredin.
"I had the good fortune to be near enough to save you, and you are now aboard of the clipper of which I am in charge—in the absence of the captain!"

"And you—you—"

"My name is Gredin, madam!"

"You—you will not harm me?" asked the poor lady, feverishly excited.

"Certainly not; but will do everything in the world I can for you!"

"And you will not take me to him?" she panted.
"Oh! you will not take me to him?"

"Of course not, madam," declared Gredin, as soothingly as possible. "Do not have the least fear whatever. I have sent a man for the doctor—"

"Oh, yes, yes—the doctor!" she murmured. "I was going for the doctor myself. But who is ill, sir? Oh, tell me who is ill!"

By this time the wild eyes of the lady, and her frenzied demeanor, had enlightened Gredin in regard to her situation.

"Here's a fine kettle of fish!" he said to himself, as he withdrew a few steps. "She's as mad as a March hare, and as sick—well, dangerously ill. Seems to me that I have put my foot into a deuced disagreeable mess!"

He stood a full minute in a profound hesitation as to his course of action in the premises.

"After all, she is Mrs. Hillston," he then said aloud, paying no heed to the moans and ejaculations of the lady, "and it's a mighty stroke of fortune for me to have her here. The troubles and cares in the case are light in comparison with the gains. She shall stay and be cared for."

He hastened to produce a flask of brandy, which he placed at Mrs. Hillston's lips.

"Drink," he enjoined. "It will do you good."

She dashed the flask from her.

"Perhaps that is as well," thought Gredin, after scrutinizing her features a moment. "She has a burning fever, and yet is shivering with those cold garments. I don't know what to do for her, I am sure."

In the mood he was in he was not displeased to find that the afflicted lady kept him pretty well employed with her questions and complaints until a hail from under the bows announced the return of Awker.

"Ah, good!" was his comment. "Now we shall see our way clearer."

Rushing from the cabin, the entrance of which he locked, Gredin hastened to the bow of the clipper.

"Here I am!" he cried, in response to another hail.

"And here am I, if you please!" cried Awker.

"Bravo! here's a rope! What success?"

"The best in the world!"

"Maum Blacky is with you, then?"

"Yes, as I told you she would be."

It was no easy task for the two men to get the sorceress aboard, she being an immensely obese woman, but in such excitement as now possessed the couple a way was soon found, and she was shown into the cabin.

"You jes' leave us alone, chil'un," was her command, when she had taken one long look at Mrs. Hillston, "and come back when I calls yer."

The couple acted upon the hint, proceeding to the deck.

"You haven't dropped a word ashore about the lady's identity, I hope?" inquired Gredin.

"Not a word. But one thing I have done that will please you. I have engaged Maum Blacky to remain on board as long as necessary, and she has accordingly made her arrangements, so that there will be no surprise or wonder at her absence."

"Bravo!" cried Gredin again. "The secret of Mrs. Hillston's existence is thus confined to this old negress and ourselves. Bravo, I say! This will be good news for Captain Runnel!"



CHAPTER XII.

THE MUTINEERS.

The silence around Arty, as he stood motionless in the forecastle of the *Bunting*, composing his smiling countenance, was suddenly broken.

"You are sure we are alone here, Rodding?" whispered a voice not three yards from the lad.

"Perfectly sure, mate. I took pains to see that much before I turned off the light!"

The two speakers were Medlar and Rodding, as Arty instantly knew by their voices—the two men, in fact, who had seemed to bear him a grudge ever since his arrival on the brig, and who had never addressed half a dozen words to him, and then only when he had endeavored to conciliate them.

- "Where is Merrick?" pursued Medlar, who to judge by his voice, was seated upon the edge of a bunk near Rodding.
 - "He is steering," was the answer.
 - " And Gillet and Mason?"
 - "They are both somewhere aft!"
- "And all the rest are housed under the boats, I suppose, telling stories?" pursued Medlar. "It is rather early to go to bed, that's a fact. You are sure we are alone here, Rodding?"

Arty would have announced his presence—as nothing was further from his character than to listen to a con-

versation not intended for his ears, but before he could speak, Medlar resumed:

"I am glad of that. I shall now have a chance to talk to you about—about the project."

"Speak low, then."

"There is likely to be some one within hearing, then?" sneered Medlar.

"No, no—but men that talk of murder can't talk too low."

"Hush! hush!" enjoined Medlar, who seemed to be scared by the brutal frankness of this remark. "Remember the old proverb, 'Walls have ears'—even the walls of a ship!"

A single word in this conversation had riveted Arty to the spot.

That word was "murder."

What did it mean? Who was to be the victim? The commander, of course.

To reach that conclusion was for the boy to conclude to remain motionless and silent, and not betray his presence by so much as a loud breath.

If any wickedness were being plotted, the lad was entitled to know it.

"Ought we to speak of the matter at all, just at present?" demanded Rodding, in a whisper.

"Certainly, if we ever propose to do anything more than talk," returned Medlar. "Delays are dangerous. What is it that we want?"

"That is easily stated, mate. We have been going to sea all our lives, and haven't a dollar nor a place to lay our heads. We are as much slaves as if we had black hides and were living in South Carolina."

"Them points is well settled, I believe," said Medlar, with grim resolution. "The only point in discussion,

Rodding, is simply a question as to the best ways and means of bettering our condition."

- "Well, what field is open? Calyforny and Australy are doubtless well enough in their way, but it's a long v'yage to either country—unless you go as an involuntary exile to Botany Bay, and then the v'yage is short enough. Doubtless there are mountains of gold and silver on the earth, and river valleys as thickly strewn with diamonds as with dirt. The only difficulty in the case is the difficulty of putting your hand or foot upon the precise mountain or valley where these things are so plentiful. If a man could live a thousand years, and travel by balloon, he might learn an easy road to fortune, but he can hardly do so under the present arrangement of affairs—at least I have not been able to."
- "Well, what better project than mine, Rodding, have you been able to discover!"

"Not any-not any!"

- "Let's understand it, then," said Medlar, with grim resolution. "In general terms, we propose to steal this vessel and everything aboard of it."
- "Exactly, but under what conditions? Shall we be obliged to kill the cap'n?"
- "I expect he will force us to. You know what sort of a man he is? Once let him get an inkling of our purpose, and he would fight like a tiger."
- "There's one stout arm in our way, then," commented Rodding. "Who is with him?"
- "Why Merrick, and Gillet and Mason, and so on—just one half of the crew, if we count the cook and Cuddle. As to that boy and girl they are not worth counting. All we have to do is to knock them on the head and throw them overboard the moment we are masters of the vessel."

"I know a trick worth two of that," said Rodding.

"The girl is pretty, and we had better save her—take her to the west coast with us, and in due course of time either marry her to some Portuguese or Spanish trader who will pay liberally for her, or else cast lots for her ourselves."

"Well, well, we can decide about the girl after the vessel is ours," said Medlar. "In the meantime, let's decide when and how we are to seize the vessel. My preference would be for acting at once, while the cap'n is paying so much attention to that young couple and so little to us!"

"That's a good idea, mate. Suppose we act immediately—this very night."

"Agreed. It only remains to arrange just how we will proceed. The crew is about equally divided; all I have named being for the cap'n and all the others for us. Suppose—"

Here the speaker paused abruptly and listened.

"Didn't you hear somebody near us, Rodding?" he resumed excitedly.

"Yes. I thought it was you, mate!"

"And I thought it was you, Rodding-"

"I haven't stirred an inch!"

" Nor I!"

"Then who is here?"

The question convulsed the soul of our hero on the instant, as will readily be imagined. It was Arty that had been heard moving in the forecastle, he having realized that it was time for him to retreat.

"Who is here, I say?" repeated Rodding.

"Turn on your light and see!"

The injunction naturally served to render our hero's retrograde movement more rapid, but in the utter darkness it would have been next to impossible for him

to have found the entrance of the forecastle with anything like celerity. Realizing the difficult nature of the task before him, he extended his hands, feeling his way, and soon hurried—into the very arms of Medlar!

In an instant the arms of the mate had closed upon the intruder with all the violence of a sudden and desperate fright.

"I have him!" he ejaculated. "Quick! your lantern!"

A flood of light was turned upon the scene at this juncture, the conspirators having a dark lantern at command, and both of them recognized Arty instantly, despite the strange garb in which they found him accoutered.

"That boy?" gasped Rodding, as if he found it hard to believe the evidence of his senses. "That castaway?"

"As you see," returned Medlar, producing a revolver.

"He has been listening to every word we have uttered."

There was such a menace underlying the consternation of the two men that Arty was tempted to call for help. This temptation was written so legibly upon his countenance that the executive lost no time in cocking his pistol and in carrying it to the lad's ear.

"Not a word—not the least cry!" enjoined the ruffian sternly, "or you are a dead boy! What did you come here for?"

The boy stated his purpose.

"And you have heard what has passed between Rodding and me?"

"Yes, I have heard it."

"What were we talking about?"

"About murdering Captain Strong and seizing the brig."

"You see?" said the questioner, to his fellow-conspirator, in an appalled whisper—"you see, Rodding?"

"Yes, I see. But Arty is a lad of sense. He will see that he has put his foot into a mesh, and will be wise. He is a boy of his word, and if he gives us a solemn promise, he will keep it. Promise me, my lad, you will never reveal one word of the conversation you have just overheard—never neither to Cap'n Strong nor to any other person, neither by word nor by writing—and we will not harm you."

The boy looked the ruffians squarely in the face.

"I can never give you any such promise," he declared quietly, but with a purpose as fixed as fate.

"And why not?"

"Because it would not be right for me to keep such a horrible secret!"

"You mean to blow on us, then?"

"I mean to tell Captain Strong all I have overheard as soon as I see him!"

"Pshaw! don't be a fool!" said Medlar, with ill-concealed rage. "What harm will your declarations do us? The cap'n will merely have your word against ours—"

"Captain Strong will believe me."

"Well, supposing he does?" returned Rodding. "He cannot prove anything. You may be sure that Mr. Medlar and I will deny the story. In no case can any harm come to us. And what will you gain by blowing on us?"

"Not anything—beyond the satisfaction of having done my duty!"

"Hallo! what's up?" suddenly called a voice at the

entrance of the forecastle, and immediately behind Arty. "What's the row?"

The new-comer was a conspirator—one of the worst ruffians in the ship.

"Hush, Brad," enjoined Medlar. 'I'll tell you what's up! This young cub has overheard Rodding and me talking up our project of seizing the ship and cargo, and says he will betray us to the cap'n!"

The eyes of the new-comer gleamed like daggers.

"So he says that, does he?" he demanded.

Medlar and Rodding both nodded.

"Then why don't you squeeze the breath out of him, and throw him overboard?"

As he uttered this query, the new-comer seized Arty by the throat with such violence as to lift the lad from his feet.

"No noise," enjoined Rodding. "The chloroform is at hand, and also the gags!"

A bottle of the destroying liquid was at once produced, as was a horrible-looking gag; but Arty was not so easily subjected to the sway of these agents. He struggled so violently as to overthrow all three of the assailants, and at the same time gave utterance to a cry that placed them in mortal fear of its being heard by ears friendly to him.

"Quick!" commanded Medlar, compressing the lad's throat violently. "Put that medicine to his nose. Hold him fast. Let's have that gag and some ropes! So. That's the way to get at it."

Realizing only too clearly how much they had to gain by the lad's death, the three desperadoes exerted themselves to the utmost, and in less time than it has taken to record the fact, he lay as inert as a corpse in their hands, the powerful drug having bereft him of his senses. "Be particular about tying him," enjoined Medlar, as Rodding produced a stout rope for that purpose. "And as still as he now is, I would gag him."

Both measures were promptly taken, and the victors arose to their feet, panting for breath, but flushed and jubilant with their triumph.

"It's well we began operations with him—the way he fights!" panted Brad. "I wouldn't have believed that any human being of his inches could make such a battle. But he's done for at last, and no one seems to be the wiser."

"No," returned Rodding, after all three had listened intently a moment. "Not a soul has heard us."

"Suppose we go on, then?" suggested Medlar, in a sharp whisper.

"Seize the brig, you mean?"

"Certainly, seize the brig. Now is our time—as sudden as the mine has been sprung upon us. A few words will make all plain to the rest of the boys."

"Good! Let's hurry up the business," said Rodding.
"Having once entered upon the matter we may as well make a finish of it. We might throw the boy overboard, to be sure, and so deny all knowledge of him, but such a course would make Strong and the rest all the more watchful, and we might never find so good a moment as the present!"

"We'll move at once, then!" said Medlar, emphatically. "In ten minutes the brig shall be ours, and then hurrah for the coast of Guinea and a free flag! This young cub is out of our way, you see," he added, as he spurned the insensible body of our hero with his foot, "and his, I take it, is an important fact in our favor!"

"It is settled, then," commented Brad. "Let's to work at once!"

Seizing their arms quickly and in silence, the three men stole noiselessly to the deck, intent upon their evil purpose, leaving Arty in the embraces of the deadly drug they had applied to his nostrils.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN EVIL TURN OF AFFAIRS.

Captain Strong and Elgie had been so busy that the prolonged absence of our young hero did not immediately strike them.

But at length the commander turned away from the thousand curiosities he had been exhibiting and describing, and arose to his feet listening uneasily.

"I thought I heard a cry!" he muttered.

Elgie joined him in listening, of course, but neither heard anything unusual.

"Arty ought to be back," said the old navigator. "I think I'll see where he is!"

"He may have found that India-rubber suit a clumsy one to move about in," suggested the girl, as a sudden pallor crept into her features.

The suggestion startled the commander more than he would have been willing to acknowledge.

"In some sudden lurch," thought he, taking his way toward the entrance of the cabin, "the boy may have bounded overboard like a ball!"

To conceive such a fear, was to become active as a lion at once.

"Remain quiet a moment," he said to Elgie, hiding his anxiety under a smile. "Merrick and the other sailors are much amused with our young porpoise, of course. But I'll see—"

A hasty tramping of feet resounded on the deck at this juncture, and the form and features of Mr. Medlar appeared at the entrance of the cabin.

"If you please, sir," began the arch-villain, "the boy has got into trouble—"

The declaration of the ruffian was interrupted by a sudden pressure upon the arm from the vice-like grip of Capt. Strong.

"Not a word more, Mr. Medlar," enjoined the commander, in a low, crisp whisper. "I will be with you instantly."

Elgie had caught enough of the interrupted speech to take the alarm.

"Oh, something has happened, Captain Strong!" she cried. "Where is Arty?"

The commander gently forced her back, as he ascended the companion way at the heels of Medlar, and said:

"Do not come upon deck, child. You will get overboard in this darkness. I will be back shortly. Wait here for me."

As scared and apprehensive as the girl had suddenly become, she could do no less than heed implicitly her benefactor's injunctions. In another instant, therefore, she was left to herself.

Taking his way to the forecastle, still at the heels of Medlar, the commander descended into the midst of half a dozen men there awaiting him.

"Where is the boy?" he asked, looking around from one to another, by the rays of a lantern in the hands of one of the conspirators.

"There he is!" returned Medlar, at the same time

indicating a motionless figure upon the floor at one side of the forecastle.

"What ails him?" continued the commander, anxiously, as he advanced a few steps and knelt beside the unconscions lad, who was moaning dismally. "What ails him?"

"He has a fit, sir," replied Medlar.

"A fit? What sort of a fit?"

"A tight one, I'm thinking!"

Here there was a general laugh.

Three at least of the mutineers had now placed themselves between Captain Strong and the entrance of the forecastle.

The captain looked around again, but this time in a wondering amazement.

"What do you mean?" he asked sternly, as his glance came back to Medlar.

"Just what I said, sir—that the lad is in as neat a fit as you'd ever wish a man to be in—just such a fit, in fact, as we are about to accommodate you with!"

With the conclusion of these words, the conspirators hurled themselves in a body upon the commander, who had not yet conceived a single suspicion of their desperate purpose.

A fearful struggle followed.

The captain was as hardy and resolute as he had been painted, and entered upon such a powerful resistance that it was a full minute before he was duly secured, and gagged and bound. But the odds were too great in their favor for the conspirators to have failed of success.

"And now to secure the rest," said Medlar, in a shrill and hurried whisper. "Tell Gillet and Mason I wish to see them here immediately."

The order was addressed to Rodding, who instantly

hastened to the deck, soon returning with the men designated, who were as promptly seized and handcuffed.

"This assures us the victory," said Medlar, jubilantly; "but we may as well save Merrick from any attempt at making us trouble. Relieve him at the wheel, Rodding, and tell him I wish to see him."

This order being duly executed, Merrick was soon a close prisoner, and the conspirators were masters of the vessel. The rejoicings of the miscreants can be imagined.

"Three cheers for Cap'n Medlar, our new commander!" exclaimed Brad.

The cheers were given and repeated with all the signs of frenzied enthusiasm.

"And now to escort the cap'n to the cabin," continued Brad. "Head off there, boys! With such a wind and sea we are at liberty to make a night of it. The late commander has lots of good things in store for us. It only remains to celebrate our victory. Forward, all together!"

Amid the greatest uproar and enthusiasm, Medlar was lifted from his feet, between Brad and another ruffian, and borne to the cabin, where he was hailed anew as commander, and where he made a short speech full of self-congratulation for the present, and of promise for the future. The terror of Elgie at these proceedings cannot easily be imagined.

"Where is Captain Strong?" she asked, at the first advent of the lawless gang into her presence.

No notice having been taken of the question, or of a similar one respecting Arty, the poor girl beat a retreat to her state-room, from which she surveyed with dilating eyes the scenes that immediately followed.

"And now for a glass of grog in honor of the new order of things," proposed Medlar, as he finally dropped into the chair at the head of the table. "Where's that lump of animated charcoal? Hey, you—Cuddle!"

At this call Cuddle appeared from a state-room in which he had concealed himself at the entrance of the conspirators. He was a prey to a profound demoralization, and rolled his eyes wildly in every direction, appearing to believe or fear that his last hour had come.

"Here, you—Cuddle," cried Medlar, at sight of the terrified dwarf, "bring us brandy and cigars—the best in the captain's locker."

The order being obeyed, the cabin was soon a scene of lawless merriment, the ruffians all talking at once, all as jubilant as defiant. The air reeked with the fumes of liquor and with the smoke of cigars.

"And now to business," exclaimed Medlar, when the festivities of the occasion had been carried to a satisfactory height. "I want Mr. Rodding. You, Brad, will please carry him my message, and take his place at the wheel."

"Mr. Rodding" was soon in the cabin, and was duly installed as chief mate of the vessel.

"And now let Mr. Strong be carried to the hold and left there in irons," continued Medlar, with a gravity that was not free from the maudlin airs of inebriation. "Let Mr. Strong be cared for. To the hold with him!"

These suppressions of the commander's titles were received with uproarious merriment by such of the conspirators as were present.

"Make yourself easy, Cap'n," said Rodding to Medlar. "I will take good care of Mr. Strong, and also of the vessel."

In an instant, as he set about his withdrawal, Elgie

was at his heels, her eyes flashing, her whole countenance radiant with indignation.

"I am going to see what you do with Captain Strong, you wicked man," she cried; "and also what you have done with Arty."

Rodding paused and looked at her in amazement.

"Oh! you mean to go with me, do you?" he demanded, with smiling contempt.

"Yes, I do. I should have left the cabin before if you hadn't kept the door locked, and the key in your pocket."

"Well, come along, then."

The new mate and Elgie were soon in the forecastle.

At sight of our hero, whose dismal moans still continued, the girl was seized with fears and apprehensions she could not control.

"Oh, you have killed him!" she cried.

Rodding again smiled contemptuously, after ordering a couple of his men, by a gesture, to remove Captain Strong to the hold.

"Oh! Arty, Arty, speak to me!" implored Elgie, as she raised the head of the unconscious boy from the floor, and looked wildly into his face and eyes. "What have they done to you?"

"We have done him no harm, young woman," declared Rodding, after he had seen Captain Strong removed from the forecastle. "You'll soon see him stirring."

The girl wept as if her heart would break. It seemed to her that Arty must be nigh unto death. Never before had she seen such a picture of helplessness and distress as he presented.

"He'll soon come out of it," pursued Rodding, touched at last by the girl's grief, or desirous of ingratiating himself with her. "He made such a fierce war upon us that we were obliged to quiet his nerves with a little chloroform. Perhaps I can help him!"

Bringing some water in a basin, he sprinkled the features of the lad plentifully, and then poured down his throat a dram of brandy.

The result was even more prompt and manifest than he expected. The boy soon opened his eyes intelligently.

"They have seized the brig, then?" was his first query.

"Yes, Arty!"

"And Captain Strong?"

The girl looked around, now for the first time missing the commander.

- "He is a prisoner in the hold!" she then answered.
- "And what is to become of us, Elgie?"
- "Heaven only knows, Arty!"

Rodding smiled grimly, continuing to regard them.

- "Yes, I know what will become of you," he declared. "But it is too soon to tell you!"
 - "The ship is still dashing on," murmured Arty.
- "Yes; the change of masters will make little change in her destination," said Rodding, complacently. "She is still headed for the west coast of Africa, by the way of the Cape De Verde islands!"

During the pause that followed, Medlar came into the forecastle, with a lantern in his hand.

"You are all right again, eh?" he said to Arty. "I am glad of it. Untie him and take off his patent life preserver, Mr. Rodding, and let him have a bit of fresh air."

The ropes with which the lad had been tied were duly removed, as was the suit of India-rubber, and he arose to his feet, to the great delight of Elgie, who clung to his neck, weeping for joy.

"It would be a pity to separate such a couple, I'm

thinking," muttered Medlar. "What do you say about it, Mr. Rodding?"

"I think just as you do, Cap'n Medlar."

"Then we will not leave the boy in irons in the hold, as I first intended," said Medlar. "On the contrary, he shall continue to occupy his state-room in the cabin. The fact is," he added, lowering his voice to a whisper, "the boy is too bold and active to be left with Mr. Strong."

"That's so. In the cabin, however, he will be under your own eye."

"The very point I was thinking about."

The matter being thus settled, Medlar turned to the young couple.

"You can both come with me," he said, and with this he led the way to the cabin.

It would be hard to describe the desolation and anguish in which Arty and Elgie found themselves at that moment. With the brig in the hands of the mutineers, with Captain Strong lying bound and helpless in the hold, and especially in view of their own utter helplessness, it seemed to them as if the cloud of darkness which had descended upon them would remain around them forever.

And yet, a few minutes later, as Arty sat silent and thoughtful in the cabin, with his hand in Elgie's, a gleam of hope stole into his mind and looked from his eyes.

"The rogues are short-handed," he whispered—"by which I mean that there are hardly enough of them to work the brig. If we should have a heavy gale—but that is too terrible to think about. They may quarrel among themselves, however, in the course of dividing the booty. Or we may meet some ship of war that will call them to account. At the worst, I may be able

to release Captain Strong and the others, and lead the way to retaking the vessel!"

Elgie was almost scared by the heroic light that had suddenly appeared in the boy's eyes.

"Oh, be careful," she enjoined. "They will kill us, if we should be caught in any such business!"

"Oh, I will be careful! But I will also be watchful! This business is not yet ended!"

CHAPTER XIV.

RUNNEL'S RETURN.

Traveling southward by rail, after his curt leave-taking of Spareman, Runnel seemed to melt away like an iceberg from the Polar regions, bound in the same direction. He could neither eat nor sleep, but grew so thin and haggard, so unlike his usual hearty self, that his best friends would soon have found it difficult to recognize him.

Only once in a while did his thoughts take upon themselves coherent shape, and then it was that he cursed Spareman, and bemoaned the loss of Arty and Elgie.

And thus bewailing and getting as thin as a shadow, the desperate and disappointed man at length approached Charleston.

Within a few hours' ride of the city he bought a daily paper, as was his wont, but with no intention of reading it. What were the news of the day to him? What possible interest could he have in human affairs, now that he had been so severely wounded in his most vital aims and ambitions?

Read the paper he did, however—in a desultory sort of way—it is so natural to an anxious traveler to pore over almost anything that offers a few moments of distraction.

In taking this course, the traveler in the present case was nearer to an abyss than he could have possibly imagined. For he had scarcely turned to the inside pages when his wandering and uneasy glances encountered a head-line reading as follows:

"Death of Mrs. Abner Hillston!"

Many a man has lost his senses forever under a smaller shock than those few words gave to Capt. Grebb Runnel.

At first he believed himself the sport of some monstrous illusion. To the great loss and disappointment he had already suffered, he could not readily add this greatest of all possible losses and disappointments.

But it was no illusion that enthralled the startled man—no blur upon his sight. The words stood out in all the force of types and ink, and seemed to sear themselves upon his comprehension.

It was even so then? The lady in question was dead? How had she died?

The tale was ominously long, as Runnel saw at a glance, it filling nearly an entire column. He forced himself to read it from beginning to end, although every word seemed to add to the despairing consternation into which the sight of the first startling line had thrown him.

"Frightful, frightful!" was his comment, as the paper at length fell from his grasp. "Seized with brain-fever she wandered away at dead of night, and is believed to have flung herself into the river, and to have been carried out to the sea by the tide. Horrible, horrible! And this is the end of my grand scheme of revenge—of all my wild hopes of a speedy and glorious triumph!"

The next coherent thought of Runnel did not come to him until some hours later—until he found himself at Charleston. Then rousing himself from the long stupor into which he had fallen, he hastily emerged from the car, and took his way on foot towards the wharves in the vicinity of Chisholm's Mills, avoiding as much as possible the notice of everybody he encountered.

Once at the wharf he was seeking, he summoned a boatman in silence, took his seat in the frail craft, and indicated the graceful Baltimore clipper with which our readers are already familiar.

"Put me aboard of her," he commanded.

In five minutes thereafter he was under the bows of the clipper.

"What, is it you, Captain?" called a voice cheerily—that of Gredin, his executive officer, who was looking down upon him. "But it is you, I see. Excuse me, Captain. I did not, at first, recognize you."

A rope ladder was lowered, the boatman dismissed, and the transit made to the deck.

"Heavenly king! how you are changed!" cried Gredin, in a sort of scared awe, as he shook hands with the newcomer. "You have been ill, I see! Or have the cursed watch-dogs of Uncle Sam been giving you a closer call than usual?"

"It is nothing of that kind," said Runnel, as he feebly returned the hearty pressure of his executive's hand. "What the deuce do I care for Uncle Sam's watch-dogs? Did you ever know me to care a fig for them? It's another matter altogether that has been killing me—a terrible disappointment!"

"The result of your journey to Massachusetts is not what you expected, then?" questioned Gredin, quietly, but with suppressed excitement. "The children are no longer living?"

"No—ten thousand curses, no!" answered Runnel, steadying himself against the bulwarks. "That fool of a Spareman, in whose charge they were, sent them adrift in a squall, and they naturally soon after found their way to the bottom of the Atlantic."

"And so your project of restoring them to their mother, in return for her hand, is brought to an ignoble close," commented Gredin, stepping about excitedly.

"As you see, Gredin," acknowledged Runnel, with an air and countenance of appalling gloom. "Nor is that all. Look at that!"

He extended to Gredin the newspaper, still clutched tightly in his hand.

At sight of the article in question, the countenance of Gredin changed its expression with singular vivacity. Controlling his emotions, however, the executive read every word of the harrowing account.

"That's rather rich, Captain," he then muttered. "I hadn't seen it before. Fact is, I haven't been ashore to-day. Capital, isn't it?"

And he chuckled grimly.

Runnel looked at his executive in astonishment.

"I hope you don't take newspaper word for the death of the two children?" continued Gredin, as he threw a glance of scorn upon the journal.

"Why, of course not," replied Runnel. "I know of my own knowledge that they are as dead as the great pyramid. But why do you ask?"

"Merely to remind you that a thing isn't true because you find it in the newspapers," declared Gredin, smilingly. "For instance, this touching tale of the death of Mrs. Hillston is wanting in one very important particular."

"What! do you mean to throw doubt upon it?" cried Runnel. "Is it not true? Has not Mrs. Hillston wandered from her home, in the delirium induced by a fever? And have not all the efforts to find her been unsuccessful? And is it not as good as demonstrated that she is the unknown woman who threw herself from one of the wharves, some six or eight days ago—"

The executive, still smiling, interrupted this torrent of questions with a gesture.

"None of those points cover the entire field," he declared. "Not to keep you in this state of painful agitation, Captain Runnel, permit me to declare in a breath that Mrs. Abner Hillston is not dead, as all these people believe and affirm. She is not merely living at this moment, but is enjoying a very tolerable degree of health!"

The face of Runnel became whiter at this assurance then Gredin had ever before seen it.

It was a full minute before the astonished man could bring under proper control the wild revulsion of feelings these declarations caused him.

"You mean what you say, Gredin, I see," then murmured Runnel. "You know of your own knowledge that Mrs. Abner Hillston is still living? You know this beyond all question?"

"Certainly!"

"Then where is she at this moment?"

"Aboard of this vessel, in the cabin!"

But for the joyous excitement that now sparkled from every feature of Gredin's face, Runnel would have found it difficult to credit this most astounding declaration.

"This is great and splendid news," murmured the overjoyed villain, after a long pause. "How long has she been here?"

"Ever since that fatal plunge of the unknown woman from the wharf, as related in your paper."

"Ah! Mrs. Hillston was really that unknown woman, then?"

"Yes. So far the article is true. But Mrs. Hillston was not drowned. I was close at hand with a boat, having been in the act of coming off to the clipper, and I had the good fortune of saving the lady, and the still greater good fortune of saving her without the knowledge of a single human being in all this city or country."

"And she is now in the cabin, you say?"

Gredin nodded.

"Then lead the way to her. What an awful load you have taken from my mind, Gredin. I shall never forget you—never!"

Arriving at the entrance of the cabin, Gredin drew a key from his pocket and unlocked the door, giving his superior admittance, and then followed himself, securing the door behind him.

One wild glance cast Runnel around the cabin, while he clung with both hands to the railing beside him.

"It is as well," he then breathed. "It seems to me that the sight of her here at this instant would have killed me."

"She is in her state-room," explained Gredin. "Perhaps I had better prepare her for your visit—least this extraordinary commotion," and he smiled, "should prove mutual."

Gasping for breath and pressing his hand to his heart, Runnel nodded assent to the proposition of his executive, and then advanced to the nearest chair, into which he dropped with a heaviness indicative of his nervous weakness. What a thought it was for him after all his years of infamous scheming, that Mrs. Hillston was within a few yards of him, aboard of his own vessel!

He was trembling with an ecstasy of mingled love and revenge, when the door of the state-room at which he was gazing was suddenly opened, and there floated out upon his gaze a vision that seemed to him almost celestial—Mrs. Hillston.

A word from Gredin had prepared the lady for the interview.

She was as self-possessed as radiant.

"You seem surprised, Captain Runnel," said the lady, in a calm, richly-vibrating voice, after he had stared at her for a long time in speechless wonderment. "Did not Mr. Gredin inform you of my presence?"

"He did indeed tell me that Mrs. Hillston was here," returned Runnel, "but he did not prepare me for this glorious revelation of loveliness! I supposed you to be ill and suffering—the same Mrs. Hillston I lately had the pleasure of seeing at your own house in the city!"

"You find me changed, then?"

"Oh, so much—so much!"

"And so much for Maum Blacky's skill in medicine," said Gredin, smilingly, as he advanced between the couple. "It is to Maum Blacky that Mrs. Hillston is chiefly indebted for this wondrous improvement in her health. She was not only delirious with fever when I brought her here, but had been adrift in the river. In a word, she was in such a state that I did not expect her to live twenty-four hours. But Maum Blacky was in no wise disconcerted, and at once set to work with such skill and daring energy that the fever was entirely broken up on the following morning. From that moment to this the patient has continued to mend, and the result is before you."

"I am feeling better to-day than I have felt for

years," said Mrs. Hillston, as she sank upon a low stationary ottoman at the rear of the apartment. "So well, in fact, that I have been all day endeavoring to prevail upon Mr. Gredin to take me ashore."

"And he refuses?" queried Runnel.

"Yes, sir, he refuses. He says that my friends would refuse to believe I am the same woman who left them eight or ten days ago. He even says that they all believe me to be dead!"

"And so they do!" said Runnel. "Would you like to know just what they think upon that point? If so, read that article!"

He placed the newspaper under the lady's eyes, and waited in silence until she had perused the whole account.

"This is terrible," was her comment. "I must go to my friends at once, you see. But first let us talk of your trip to the North," and she turned a gaze upon Runnel's features that seemed to burn them. "Mr. Gredin told me this morning that you are the owner and commander of this clipper, and that he expected you every minute, or I should have gone ashore sooner. I wanted to hear your report as early as possible. Have you brought my children?"

The question could not have been unexpected to Runnel, but it found him unprepared to answer it. His entire countenance seemed to shrivel under the lady's gaze as he sat motionless and silent, with averted eyes, asking himself how he should answer that question, and what should be his further dealings with the fair questioner!



CHAPTER XV.

THE REPORT AND CONFESSION.

Perceiving that Runnel did not give the least sign of answering her question, Mrs. Hillston repeated it, at the same time arising and advancing to his side to observe more clearly the workings of his countenance.

That the arch-villain was at a loss how to reply, was visible at a glance. And as Mrs. Hillston marked only too surely this circumstance, a look of mingled contempt and disgust became manifest on her features.

"Come, come!" she ejaculated. "Can you not answer a simple question? Or must you have time to concoct some lying answer?"

Runnel started as if a serpent had stung him.

"You will excuse me, Mrs. Hillston," he said, "when you learn the cause of my hesitation."

"That remains to be seen! Why do you not answer my question?"

"I was simply asking myself if it would be right and kind to tell you all the facts in my knowledge, or if it would be better to conceal a portion of them from you."

"A characteristic problem, it seems," murmured the lady, coldly. "Let me give you a hint, Captain Runnel, for reaching its solution. The hour has come for frankness between you and me, as the first of any and all relations that can or may hereafter exist between us!"

"Thanks for the assurance," said Runnel, with a long

breath of relief. "I had about reached that conclusion unaided. I will deal with you from this moment in all sincerity and frankness!"

"Then begin by answering my question. Have you brought my children?"

"No, Mrs. Hillston, I have not brought them, I am sorry to say!"

An awful pallor suddenly replaced all the bright and beautiful flushes which feverish excitement and expectancy had previously called to the mother's cheeks.

"You—you have not seen them, then, since you left me?" she faltered.

"No, I have not seen them!"

The silence that succeeded this avowal was one of those appalling silences in which human blood seems to curdle.

"And in view of this very serious fact, Mrs. Hillston," resumed Runnel, after a long pause, "you will not wonder that I have hesitated as to the completeness of the report I am called upon to give of my journey to Massachusetts!"

"Ah! it is to Massachusetts, then, that you have made this flying visit?" asked the lady.

"Yes, it is to Massachusetts," avowed Runnel, as he settled himself more firmly into the chair he had taken. "But before I report upon this little trip, will it not be well for me to make a confession of my past sins towards you? In a word, to go back to the first hour in which I entered upon all these years of revenge? Would you not like to hear the history of your children from that hour?"

The eager start given by Mrs. Hillston attested what a vital chord of her heart the villain had touched with this suggestion.

"Oh, if you would!" she murmured. "What could

be more interesting to me? Even your voice will be sweet to me, if you talk to me of my children. Where have they passed all these years? What have been their experiences? Be quick to enter upon these revelations, Captain Runnel, and I will bless you."

The features of Runnel lost a portion of the stern lines by which, until now, they had been corrugated. He comprehended clearly enough from the words and mien of Mrs. Hillston, that he was sailing upon the right track.

"Ten years ago," be began, "when I stole your children, I traveled as straight as an arrow to New Orleans, where I arrived just in time to place them aboard of a brig that was in the act of dropping down the river. The name of this brig was the *Emerald*. She was bound for Boston."

"Let me put down the name of the brig and her destination," proposed Mrs. Hillston. "Not that I shall ever forget a word you are now saying to me, but that I wish to assure myself beyond all doubt that your future declarations upon these subjects will not vary from those you now make to me!"

"Write down the points, then," enjoined Runnel, with another long sigh. "I am going to give you the facts in all their sombre reality!"

"Go on, sir!"

"The children having thus been placed aboard the brig," resumed Runnel, "in charge of the stewardess, I watched the vessel until she had left the mouth of the river, thus assuring myself that they were not discovered and that no weighty suspicions of my actions in the premises had arisen. And while the *Emerald* thus took her way northward by water, I flew in the same direction by land, arriving at Boston several days before the brig

would be due there, to judge by the passages she was in the habit of making!"

"And so you were in Boston at the moment of the brig's arrival?"

"Excuse me, madam, the brig never reached that port, I am sorry to say," continued the narrator. "At the instant of entering Massachusetts Bay she was caught in a terrific snow-squall—one of those icy blasts peculiar to the region—and in the dense gloom that followed, the commander lost his way, or missed his calculations. The result of the business was that the brig went ashore just north of Boston, and was dashed in pieces?"

"But those aboard of her were saved?"

"Not a soul of them, save the two children—not a soul of them, Mrs. Hillston! And to what those helpless infants owed their preservation I cannot even imagine!"

"It was the great mercy of God that encompassed them about!" declared the lady, as she raised her streaming eyes to heaven. "And so they were saved. Go on, sir—go on."

"I doubt not that the honest old skipper had taken a liking to the little things," resumed Runnel, "and that he made every effort in the world to save them, even to the sacrificing of his own life—for he was among the lost. Be that as it may, the boy and girl fell into the hands of an old fisherman named Dickerill, and received from this man and his neighbors every care and attention."

"The name is on this page as well as upon my heart," declared the lady, writing again upon the paper before her. "I shall never forget it."

"I was on the ground in person during the succeeding afternoon," continued Runnel, "an account of the wreck having been telegraphed to Boston at daylight, and I came to the conclusion that the children would be perfectly safe from all pursuit in the retired corner of creation where the winds and waves had landed them. If you remember what were my feelings at the time, you will readily understand that my only intention and desire in the premises was to prevent you and your husband from ever learning what had become of those children."

The lady sighed profoundly.

"You succeeded only too well in your purpose, Captain Runnel," she murmured. "If we had for a moment been tempted to look after the *Emerald*, we should have been restrained by the fact that every soul aboard of her was reported to have perished. I remember the circumstance well, now that you have opened the way so far for me to recall it. Continue."

"I accordingly turned my back upon that rock-bound coast," proceeded Runnel, "and did not take my way thither again until nearly eight years afterwards. There were two good reasons for this absence from the scene—the pressure of numerous business affairs in Africa and elsewhere, and the deucedly close, watch your husband was maintaining by his army of detectives upon my movements. For years I did not dare to turn my steps northward lest I should thus be the means of betraying where the children were hidden!"

"Oh, you were cunning enough for us!" commented Mrs. Hillston. "The whereabouts of the poor children was only too well guarded. Until the hour of his death, my husband believed that they were hidden in the midst of the Bahama Islands!"

Runnel started at the last two words as if shot, and a flush of wild excitement ran like lightning over his visage. "The Bahama Islands!" he then repeated, with a smile that was singularly unnatural. "No, no, Mrs. Hillston, it was upon this rude fishing-coast of Massachusetts Bay that fate had placed your children."

"And so eight years after the shipwreck—that is to say about two years ago—you ventured to pay them a visit?" murmured the lady. "How did you find them—in what situations, I mean?"

"Well, the boy had been bound out to a butcher named Blodgett, and was being worked like a slave. As to the girl, she had been taken by a woman named Mrs. Spareman, in whose family she was living as a general drudge."

The eyes of the mother flamed with indignation, even as they filled with tears.

"Truly—you had your revenge!" she faltered. "But it was revenge you were seeking. Go on!"

"This Spareman—the husband of the lady I have mentioned—was a man who had once been quite intimate with me upon the West Coast of Africa. I knew him as a fugitive from justice—as a detestable villain. I had even recognized him at my first visit to the coast, although I did not on that occasion make myself known to him."

"And so my children were living in separate places two years ago—the boy with a butcher named Blodgett, and my little girl with a Mrs. Spareman, the wife of a fugitive slave-trader you formerly knew in Africa."

"That's about how it was, madam."

Mrs. Hillston made a memorandum of the information, while Runnel moistened his husky throat with a drink of brandy.

"If you choose to remember the circumstances, Mrs. Hillston," he then continued, "you will recall that your husband was pursuing me two years ago with unusual

energy and bitterness. There even came an hour when I believed that his detectives had tracked him to that lonely coast, and when I feared that he would end the long war between us by placing his hand upon his children. Goaded by those apprehensions, I lost no time in renewing acquaintance with Spareman, at the dead of a dark night, and in suggesting to him that he would be ten thousand dollars richer the very day he could bring me proofs that the children were dead."

The lady started to her feet as if subjected to the shock of an electric battery.

"This is monstrous—horrible!" she exclaimed.
"You charged this man Spareman with the murder of
my poor children?"

"As I was frankly saying, and Spareman assured me that he would soon send me news of the entire accomplishment of my wishes. But month after month glided away in bald excuses, and then came the death of your husband, which at once suggested to me a notable change of views and projects, inasmuch as it permitted me to lay siege to your hand."

"And so you countermanded your order to Spareman respecting the children!"

"No, it was impossible. I was in Africa at the moment the news of your husband's death reached me. Besides, my first action in the premises was to obtain a promise from you to become my wife, in consideration of the restoration by me of the children. This promise I was so fortunate as to secure some twenty days ago, and thereupon I instantly turned my face northward. Your detective followed me to Norfolk, but there I shook him off—"

"And the children—the children!" interrupted Mrs. Hillston, in a shrill voice of distress. "You found them still living?"

"You shall soon hear. On reaching Spareman's, I found that he had made various efforts to get rid of the children, but had failed in every instance!"

"Thank heaven for that!"

"On the very night of my arrival at his house, however," proceeded Runnel, hurriedly, "the two children reached a resolve to end their long misery by running away. Taking the shore road to Boston, they traveled several hours toward the city, at last taking refuge for the night in a boat they found upon the shore of a cove. Here they were found soon afterward by Spareman, who, mindful of my former instruction, and anxious to secure the ten thousand dollars I had promised him, sent the boat adrift in the very teeth of a squall, with the young couple fast asleep in it!"

The soul of Mrs. Hillston was rent with a dreadful expectancy at this announcement. It was with difficulty that she managed to articulate:

"And they were lost, Captain Runnel?"

"They have not been heard of from that moment to the present," declared Runnel, whose desperation at the fact was nearly as great as her own—so great as to render him indifferent to any shock he might give her. "But I do not by any means despair of receiving good news from them. The boat in which they went adrift was a life-boat of peculiar construction—one especially designed to ride out the wildest gales. It went adrift, too, in fine weather, and on a portion of the coast where ships of all kinds are constantly passing. I do not have the least doubt, therefore, that the couple were rescued from their perilous position, and that they are as safe at this moment as you and I are, Mrs. Hillston."

A long silence succeeded, and then came a single question from the panting lips of the afflicted mother:

"But where are they?"

"It's impossible to say," replied Runnel. "They have doubtless been carried to some distant port—to Europe, Africa, or the Brazils—so that it will be a comparatively long time before we shall hear of their safety. But that they are safe somewhere, you may consider perfectly certain. We have only to watch the shipping news from all points to hear of them in due course!"

At this juncture a sharp hail resounded under the bows of the clipper.

"See who it is, Darrell," said Runnel to his executive.

The officer vanished, but returned almost instantly, placing a telegraph message in the hands of his superior, with the remark:

"It is sent off in a special boat by your agents in the city."

Runnel hastened to tear open the missive. A single glance at the contents and signatures brought a yell of delight to his lips.

"It is from old Spareman!" he shouted, rather than said. "The children are safe! They were picked up by Captain Strong of the brig Bunting—a Salem trader—bound to the west coast of Africa. The Bunting having been spoken by a homeward-bound vessel, Captain Strong has made this report for the benefit of those concerned. Capital! Read for yourself!"

Flushing and paling by turns, the lady seized and read the document.

- "Is this entirely trustworthy?" she asked.
- "Entirely so. I am familiar with the name of the Bunting, and her commander—"
- "But would not the brig put back with the children?"
 - "No, not under ordinary conditions. She would con-

tinue on her way to the west coast of Africa, and the children would naturally remain with her."

"Oh, that we could follow her! Oh, that I could go in quest of my loved ones."

"Nothing is easier, Mrs. Hillston, as I was about to suggest to you," declared Runnel, with a snaky gleam in his eyes. "The good ship beneath your feet is bound in the same direction, and can be ready for departure before midnight. If you will do me the honor of remaining in her as a passenger, I can safely promise you that within four weeks the two children will be brought into your presence."

A cry of hope burst from Mrs. Hillston's lips.

"I will go," she cried. "Make all your arrangements as quickly as possible. Let's be off at once."

"But will you not need to go ashore?"

"No, sir. Everybody supposes me dead. Let that conviction remain current until this dreadful problem about my children is decided. I have no heart to see any one, no need of anything—no other wish whatever than that to be hastening over the ocean in the direction the *Bunting* has taken."

"Then make yourself at home, madam," invited Runnel. "Mr. Gredin and I will not lose a moment in making our arrangements for an instant departure."

The villain was as good as his word. Within six hours after these declarations were made the clipper had left the port of Charleston, and was dashing boldly out into the Atlantic, taking the direction of the Cape de Verde Islands!

"In any case, I shall have her in my hands," said Runnel to Gredin, as he stood upon the deck smiling and contented. "And not a soul behind us will ever know that she is still living, unless she becomes Mrs. Grebb Runnel!"



CHAPTER XVI.

A DESPERATE PROJECT.

The night which followed the seizure of the Bunting by Medlar and his gang was as busy as turbulent. The affair was more than sudden—it had been sprung upon the conspirators by Arty's discovery of their purpose, and by the consequent necessity of acting a few days sooner than originally intended.

But the business had none the less been a complete success.

Not merely Captain Strong himself, but all of those likely to side with him, had been duly ironed and taken to the hold, and the little brood of mutineers were in full possession of the brig and her cargo.

"And a fine prize she is, boys," said Medlar, after he had examined the captain's manifest with due attention. "The result will be a fortune for every mother's son of us, if the sale of the goods is properly managed!"

"And then comes a voyage to America with a cargo of ebony-wood," exclaimed Rodding with a laugh. "That is the real aim of our proceedings, of course. The profit of a single cargo of slaves—such as the Bunting can carry, if landed upon the coast of Georgia or Cuba, cannot fall far short of a hundred thousand dollars. A good stanch vessel being the first necessity for this line of industry, we have been compelled to lay violent hands upon the Bunting, as grieved as I am to

have been forced into an act so repugnant to my morality."

"Here, Mr. Rodding, suppose you take another glass of grog after that stupendous effort," suggested Medlar. "Your imagination is too lively to last without some such strengthening."

Another bout of drinking succeeded, the new officers of the brig fraternizing with their men, and not more than two individuals remaining on duty—the man at the wheel and a solitary lookout forward.

"I shall have to promote that boy to the berth of able seaman, I think," remarked Medlar, as his glances rested upon Arty, who was uttering guarded comments upon the scene in Elgie's ears. "We are too few in number to do without him."

Catching the eye of our hero, Medlar motioned him to approach, which Arty did.

"I have placed you in Mr. Rodding's watch, my boy," announced Medlar to him, "and you may as well transfer yourself to the forecastle, taking your chances with the rest. Not a word of opposition, if you please. I am now the master of this vessel. You can see your sister, of course, as often as you please, when you are not on duty, and she will remain in her present quarters until further advices. Mr. Rodding will now show you to your new post, and my first, last and only advice to you is to be willing and civil, and never go near Mr. Strong and those with him."

It caused Arty a great effort to resign himself to this disposition of affairs, but he was too brave and thoughtful not to make the best of a bad bargain. Yielding to his adverse fate, he exchanged a few remarks and assurances with Elgie, and then proceeded to the new quarters assigned him.

"This is the second time Medlar has disposed of me

within an hour," he said to himself, bitterly. "A little while ago he said I could remain in the cabin, and now he wants me to play 'able seaman' and remain in the forecastle. What's the meaning of these conflicting plans? Evidently he is afraid of me. It's clear that he hardly knows what to do with me."

While these reflections were passing in the lad's mind, Medlar was quietly pursuing his task of settling himself comfortably into the position he had usurped.

"Cuffee will remain in the same position as before," he decided, "and so will Cuddle, only I will take care that both of the black rascals are kept in better training. Hey, you—Cuffee and Cuddle!"

These two representatives of Africa soon stood trembling in the presence of Medlar, who proceeded to lay down the Medlian law and programme to them. That they were worried and scared by the instructions he gave them was sufficiently evinced by their eyes. Never before had they displayed such vast fields of milky whiteness around their visual organs.

"At seven o'clock in the morning, Cuffee," finished the petty despot, "you must have ready for the boys the best breakfast you are capable of cooking. It is my intention to give them a little blow-out in honor of the new order of things, and you must take good care that everything goes off like clock-work. Cuddle will wait on table and make himself generally useful, and if you have the least regard for your black hides you must both put the best foot forward."

The two scared officials declared that they would do their best on any and every occasion, and were then allowed to escape for the time being to the deck.

In the darkness that still reigned upon the deck of the brig, it would appear to have been no easy task for one person to distinguish another, but Arty and Cuddle were in close counsel with each other, within five minutes after the conversation we have recorded.

"So, the villain gives a 'blow-out' to the 'boys,' does he, in the morning?" commented Arty, upon one of the first items of information Cuddle gave him. "If you were brave, Cuddle—"

The dwarf declared, in his uncouth way, that he was as brave as any man in the world, and in proof of the fact offered to jump overboard at the least hint to that effect from his companion.

"I mean, then, if you were willing to do me a very great favor—"

This suggestion was no less promptly met than the other, the dwarf declaring that there was no trouble he would not take to oblige Arty.

In good truth, the two youngsters had developed a profound harmony and sympathy with each other, as short as was the period of their acquaintance. There is no greater or better basis for a mutual understanding than a thorough agreement in age, position, pursuits, hopes and fears, and it was only natural, therefore, that Arty and Cuddle should have already become as intimate as brothers, notwithstanding the marked difference in their characters and capabilities as in their complexions.

"Then I will tell you something, Cuddle," whispered Arty in the ear of the dwarf. "You know it was very wrong and wicked for Medlar and the rest to have seized the ship?"

The dwarf assented.

"You know, too, that they have rendered themselves liable to be hanged as pirates if they should be caught in the business?" continued Arty, impressively. "It is piracy to seize a ship in this manner, and all pirates are to be put to death whenever they are found out and captured. You understand, then, Cuddle, that these men

are already pirates, and that we have a perfect right to turn against them?" Cuddle again nodded.

"Then, why don't we?"

It was clear that the dwarf felt the full force of the question. His eyes gleamed with an energy peculiar to the savage.

"There is a way," continued Arty, after he was sure of the dwarf's approval. "All we have to do," and his voice sank still lower, "is to give Medlar and his 'boys' a dose of laudanum in their coffee in the morning."

A swift, low chatter of approval came from Cuddle. He saw the practicability of the measure at once.

"In the captain's medicine-chest there are all sorts of drugs and powders," added Arty, in a barely audible tone "Among the rest of the bottles, I am sure, there is a large one filled with laudanum. Two table-spoonfuls of that poison in the coffee-pot will do the business for the entire brood of vipers. Shall they not have it, Cuddle?"

The dwarf bowed quickly, with sly but fervent jubilance.

"Then it only remains for us to consider how we shall secure the poison, and how we shall use it with the least risk of detection," said Arty, gravely. "These are very essential points, Cuddle, for Medlar and his friends will kill us if they so much as suspect one half I have said to you already. Shall we take Cuffee into our confidence?"

"Of course," replied the dwarf. "He feels just as we do."

"Is that Cuffee yonder?" Cuddle bowed.

"Then call him here."

Cuddle complied with the injunction, and the three counter-conspirators were soon deeply absorbed in the details of their desperate project.



CHAPTER XVII.

THE RESULT.

At last Medlar was happy.

Seated at the head of the cabin-table in the *Bunting*, dispensing smiles and good cheer to his minions, he felt that he had turned his long worthless existence to capital account. With the stanch brig and her cargo at his service, and with an almost unlimited capability of wickedness opening before him, he flattered himself that he was about to make his mark upon the great world in which he had so long lived unnoticed.

"Fill up, boys," he called, after he had seen that his fellow-conspirators were all in the places assigned them. "It may not be putting on much style for us to open a grand breakfast with brandy, but I can swear that it is perfectly natural."

A roar of noisy approval attested that this was the general sentiment.

"And agreeable, too, Cap'n Medlar," affirmed Rodding, who had planted himself at the opposite end of the table. "Let others do as they will, I will never go back upon a friend," and he raised his tumbler of brandy into view, "who has never refused to cheer and refresh me when called upon."

The approval of these sentiments was as uproarious as before.

"Are you all helped, boys?" cried Medlar, looking around upon his confederates. "If so, let us all drink to the success of the business upon which we have entered!"

The proposal was honored amid great enthusiasm.

"That boy is steering as wild as a catamount," muttered Medlar, putting down his tumbler, as the brig gave a wide yaw.

The "boy" in the case was Arty.

It was the first time he had ever been put to steering the brig, and on more accounts than one he was unusually nervous and excited, so that his inexperience at the task was vividly apparent.

"He's doing very well for the time he has been at the business, Cap'n Medlar," cried Rodding, with a laugh. "As he gets older—in our training—he will naturally get wiser!"

"He's the only man on duty, I believe?"

"Yes, sir!"

Such was the fact. The minions of Medlar were all collected at his table.

"He will have no trouble in managing the brig, I hope?" continued Medlar.

"Not the least in this wind and sea," declared Rodding. "Besides, he is out of mischief. So long as he is steering the brig he will not be caught giving aid and comfort to his friends in the hold!"

At this reference to the situation of Captain Strong and his fellow prisoners, there was a general increase of merriment on the part of the conspirators.

"Pity they are not here to share the feast with us," muttered Medlar. "But sin brings its own punishment, you know, even as virtue is ever its own reward. They must make the best of the awkward little box in which

they have placed themselves by claiming a morality superior to ours!"

"What do you propose to do with them, Cap'n Medlar?" asked Brad.

"Haven't fully decided the point," answered Medlar, with a consequential toss of the head. "Their fate will depend in a measure upon circumstances. For instance, if I should find a good master for them among the Arabs of the Morocco coast, I think I would part with them at a very low price. In any case, it will be rather essential for us to leave them in such snug quarters that they will not report our proceedings for a long time to come!"

"There is only one place that answers to the requirements of the occasion," avowed Rodding, with a fiendish leer, "and that is a snug little hole just about two miles below me at this very moment!"

A look of ominous gravity passed over Medlar's face at the suggestion.

"You are right there, Mr. Rodding," he affirmed. "The ocean alone is a perfectly sure hiding-place—a grave that never betrays its secrets!"

The teeth and forks of the guests had been busy while these remarks were in progress, and the scene the cabin now presented was one of prodigal feasting and carousal. The very choicest stores of the brig had been placed under contribution for the breakfast, and the two Africans had been as busy as bees in its preparation since long before daylight. Without wasting our time to go into details, we may say, in general terms, that it was a breakfast (in more ways than one) to which all of those present had until that hour been total strangers.

"We're living at last, Cap'n Medlar," called Rodding to his superior.

"Yes, and long may this sort of thing continue," returned Medlar, with a maudlin gesture. "I see you all appreciate the little attention I am paying you, and trust you will all be perfectly happy. Are you all helped, by the way, to a cup of this prime old Java?"

A general affirmative was given him.

"It is like nectar," declared Medlar, allowing the beverage to fall in a miniature cascade from his spoon. "For once, that black rascal, its namesake, has outdone himself. Another cup, Cuddle, and see that nobody is neglected."

The alacrity with which Cuddle responded to the injunction was a little marred by an unwonted nervousness which was manifesting itself in his every look and action. Cuffee, too, was as excited as his fellow. Both trembled as they marked the general attention the beverage so highly extolled was receiving.

"That's old Java, is it?" ejaculated Brad, as he supped his second cup.

"It's certainly so labelled," replied Medlar.

"In that case I am afraid the infant has been changed in the cradle."

"Why, how is that, Brad?"

"It may be in the burning, or the boiling, or in my own taste—the latter, the most likely—but it struck me as having an unusual flavor."

A slight frown gathered upon Medlar's face at the remark. Rodding noticed the frown, and hastily nudged the critic.

"It is not for us to make such comments here," whispered the executive. "Add that you were trying to say something in favor of the coffee that should be worthy of it."

Brad hastened to act upon the suggestion, and the

incident of the "unusual flavor" was instantly dismissed from the minds of all present.

"Pity that Miss Elgie will not join us," exclaimed Medlar. "It would have made our breakfast a great deal more home-like to have seen her in Rodding's chair. But the little thing is nearly scared to death with all our late uproar, and I could do no less than excuse her."

"You should have made her come, Cap'n," said Brad, who, like all the rest, was more or less under the influence of liquor. "The only way is to begin as you wish to go on. Once excuse a pert little minx like that, and you may continue excusing her forever."

"There is something in that," returned Medlar, who was now sufficiently in his cups to be quarrelsome and noisy. "The next time I won't be so easy with her. I have my reasons, however," and he chuckled. "I intend to have that girl educated by the nuns of Madeira, and to marry her in due course. She's a piece of calico worth having."

The words were heard by Elgie, who was peering out upon the orgie, the door of her state-room being slightly ajar. A vivid flush passed over her sweet face, and was quickly followed by a death-like pallor.

The more the conspirators drank the less they ate and talked. Nearly all present had now ceased eating, and the conversation had become a succession of rambling ejaculations.

"How close it is here!" suddenly murmured Rodding.

"Yes, the place is like an oven," returned Medlar. "Open everything, Cuddle. Let's have all the air you can give us."

More nervous and agitated than ever, Cuddle and Cuffee both hastened to obey orders.

"Strange how wildly that fellow is steering!" re-

sumed Medlar, looking at the lamp suspended above his head. "I surely thought he was about to capsize us."

"Nonsense, Cap'n," returned Brad. "You must be dreaming. The *Bunting* is on as even a keel as before she was launched."

"No, the boy is steering wildly," affirmed Rodding.

"At this rate he will have us topsy-turvy."

"As to that, I've reached that p'int already," said Medlar. "The whole ship is spinning. Strange that the brandy should take hold of me in this way! I was never more sleepy in my life. How hot it is! More air, Cuddle! more air!"

The dwarf cast one wild glance of startled inquiry at Medlar, and then slipped to the door and to the deck—a movement in which he was at once imitated by Cuffee.

"Perhaps a cigar'll set me right," muttered Medlar, passing his hand over his eyes. "The cigars, Cuddle—the cigars!"

No response being given him, the demand was repeated.

"You'll call in vain," then said Rodding. "The black rascals have left us."

"Left us!"

"They've gone on deck, Cap'n, and we can't do better than follow them. But—"

The man hesitated, staring wildly around.

"But what, Rodding?"

"Don't you see that Brad has tumbled? He's in a dead sleep already!"

"Well, I am not far from the same fix," growled Medlar. "Seems to me that there is something strange in all this business. Perhaps another sip of coffee will help me!" He drank a few swallows and then put down his cup with a gesture of horror and consternation.

"There is a queer taste in the cup!" he cried, starting to his feet. "Did not Brad say so?"

"Yes, he did!"

"There's a cause for it" cried Medlar, turning deadly pale. "We have been drugged by the black rascals! We are poisoned!"

"Poisoned? You think so?"

"But I'll have my revenge!"

Drawing a revolver, Medlar staggered several steps in the direction of the companion-way, and then came to a halt, gasping and reeling.

"Too late," he muttered. "I can see nothing. All is dark!"

And he sank down in a heap upon the floor.

Rodding tore at his own breast a moment, as he also struggled toward the deck.

"It is even so," he then cried. "We are poisoned!"

He made one brief but desperate effort to cast off the effect of the drug he had taken, and then he, too, sank down unconscious.

In three minutes more, a silence like that of death had taken possession of the cabin.

Elgie stole out of her state-room—cast a glance of relief and satisfaction around her—and then bounded to the deck.

"It is done!" she shouted—"it is done."

Cuddle and Cuffee at once struck hands and entered upon one of their "native tear-arounds," as Capt. Strong had called them.

As to Arty, he steered a few moments more wildly than ever, and then said to Elgie:

"Bring the bunch of keys from Medlar's pocket." The girl hastened to obey him.

"And now go down into the hold and set the captain free."

This was quickly accomplished. And once free himself, Capt. Strong hastened to release his fellow-sufferers. In less than five minutes more they were all upon deck.

"Take the helm there, Merrick!" called the commander. "That boy has saved us."

The "tear-around" of Cuddle and Cuffee had now become terrific, and something very like it succeeded on the part of Capt. Strong and Arty and Elgie, and all the friends so strangely restored to them. The scene then and there presented, in fact, was one of those which make up for almost any amount of suffering, and one which we may safely leave to the imagination of the reader. Our brave Arty had, at length, reached a tremendous triumph.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A SUSPICIOUS VISITOR.

The first beams of a glorious day were just breaking over the ocean, nearly two weeks later than the occurrences of the preceding chapter.

"Is not that land ahead to the right of us, Captain Strong?" asked Arty, as he and the commander of the Bunting walked slowly back and forth upon the brig's deck.

"Yes, my lad," was the reply. "That is the north end of the island of St. Antonio!"

The island in question is the westernmost of the Cape

de Verdes. Knowing that his destination would bring him to that neighborhood, Arty had for some days been qualifying himself with the captain's books and charts for an acquaintance with the group, but he was hardly prepared for the bald and naked appearance the island presented, a few moments later, when the gray, cold mists and shadows had been dispelled around it.

"Why, it looks like a mere rock standing out of the water!" he exclaimed.

Captain Strong smiled.

"That's just what it is—only it's a rather large rock," he affirmed. "None of the islands off the west coast of Africa are anything more. They are all of volcanic origin. They were all vomited forth from the interior of the earth long, long ago—some thousands of years, more or less, from the present time."

Securing the captain's glass, Arty gazed long and earnestly to the southward.

"We are rounding St. Antonio," he then ejaculated.

"Naturally, or we should not reach the island next beyond it—St. Vincent."

"That is St. Vincent, then—that rock farther to the northward?"

"Yes, that rock contains the best port in the whole group—Porto Grande," said Captain Strong. "It is to that port that we are bound, as I must have already mentioned."

The winds being light and unfavorable, the advance of the brig was not rapid, although she was aided by the current, which in the waters of the Cape de Verdes has a strong tendency to the eastward during all seasons and breezes. It was some hours later, or rather past the middle of the forenoon, when the *Bunting* reached her proposed berth in Porto Grande and dropped her anchor.

"Out with her boat, Mr. Merrick," commanded Captain Strong. "I'll lose no time in getting ashore, for I want to get rid of those ruffians in the hold as soon as possible."

The boat was promptly lowered, and Gillet and Mason, two of the best seamen aboard the brig, were detailed to row her.

"As I leave you in charge, Mr. Merrick," said Captain Strong to his executive—for Merrick was now in the position of which Medlar had proved so unworthy—"I have no other orders to give you than to enjoin you to be watchful. Those rascals below know where we are, and may make some desperate attempt at the recovery of their freedom."

"I will look out for them, sir," returned Merrick, quietly. "There's hardly an hour of the day—or night—when I do not see them."

Elgie came hurrying on deck at this juncture, joining Capt. Strong and Arty, and was as delighted at finding herself at Porto Grande as a bird at escaping from its prison.

"Oh, how beautiful!" was her first involuntary cry.

Capt. Strong and Arty smiled indulgently, as the latter threw his arm protectingly around the girl. To them the scene shorewards was far from meriting her enthusiasm, except upon the theory that all forms of terra firma are lovely to eyes which have long had only the surface of the boundless ocean to rest upon.

"Well, if you are so pleased with the scene, my young lady," said Capt. Strong, "get ready as soon as you can, and you shall go ashore with us."

The delighted girl was ready in a few moments, and the little party was soon embarked and on its way to the landing.

"As you see, Arty," said Capt. Strong, "the harbor is

completely protected from the westwardly winds by the island of St. Antonio. There is room here for hundreds of ships."

"And yet there is only one in sight," returned Arty, scanning every portion of the vast semi-circular bay before him, "and that is a brig like ours. One would almost say it is the *Bunting*."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the commander. He was interested at once. "Your eyes are good, boy," he said, after a searching glance at the stranger. "She may be one of our Salem traders."

There was quite a swell upon the harbor, as indeed is usually the case at Porto Grande, but the occupants of the boat did not even notice the fact, so entirely were their thoughts given up to the scene around them.

"The shores don't look so beautiful now," Elgie was soon constrained to say. "One would almost think they have been scorched in a great fire. How barren and desolate they are!"

The town was now coming into view, looking quite as unpromising as the shores around it. It is composed of about a hundred miserable hovels, which are constructed of small, loose stones, in the manner of stone fences, and which stand in rows, with some pretence of regularity.

"Not a very inviting prospect, I must say," muttered Captain Strong, half to himself.

"Have you never been here before, sir?" asked Elgie.

"No; and I shall never wish to come again. But business is business. If we can hand over our mutineers to the consul, I shall have no complaints to make of the country."

As the boat neared the landing, quite a crowd of ragged and unkempt persons of nearly all complexions save white were seen gathering upon the dilapidated little piers and along the adjacent roads. In the midst of the motley groups were several individuals who were displaying the airs of "brief authority," and it was to one of these active personages that Captain Strong addressed himself at the moment of landing.

"I want to see the governor," said the commander, stepping ashore.

"Berry good, sah," came the instant response. "I is she!"

"What! you?"

The hardy skipper recoiled in amazement.

The party laying claim to the governorship of Porto Grande and the surrounding country was barefooted and barelegged, and with hardly clothes enough upon his person to have wadded a shot-gun. At the first blush he would have been taken for a negro, so swarthy was his complexion, but he was mostly Portuguese.

"I am glad to see you, sir," said Captain Strong, accepting the rather dirty hand that was proffered him. "There has been a mutiny aboard of my vessel, the brig yonder, and I have several men in irons, to be delivered up to the consul and sent home for trial."

The governor replied vivaciously, speaking his native dialect exclusively, but Capt. Strong comprehended that he was referring the whole matter to the Consular Agent of the United States in his dominions.

"And where is this Consular Agent, if you please?" asked the commander.

"She go fishing," answered the governor, jerking his arm seaward. "No," and he jerked his arm home again, "she coming."

In effect, another barefooted individual, in dirty gilt lace and gilt buttons, was seen sauntering toward the landing.

"Him the Consular of America," added the governor,

with a flourish toward the new-comer. "She attend to you, sah."

The "consular" was soon on the spot. He was as much like the governor as one pea is like another—of the same mixed and dingy complexion, but chiefly of Portuguese origin.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Consul," said Capt. Strong, after the governor had introduced his *confrere*. "There has been a mutiny on our vessel, and I wish to hand the mutineers over to your charge and keeping."

The consular agent looked considerably abashed at the announcement, but he was quite an adept in the use of the English language, and lost no time in demanding:

"How many of these men are there?"

"Five, sir."

"Five, sir?" echoed the agent, with a start of astonishment. "Why, that is just the strength of the governor's army—only three of our soldiers are negroes, and one of the three is a worthless cripple. Five, sir? Why, they will devour us—throw us into the sea—scoop us!"

"But you have a jail here, of course—a prison of some kind—"

"No, sir. That is to say, our old prison is being made into lime—there's just one burning of 1t—and our new prison is not yet dug out of the quarry. All I can show you is the place where the new jail is designed to be."

"Then what am I to do?" asked Capt. Strong. "I don't wish to carry these murderous ruffians all over creation with me. They ought to be sent home for trial and punishment."

The agent reflected with an intensity born of desperation.

"I'll tell you what to do," he said. "The United States frigate Macedon was here the other day, and I expect her back from one minute to another. Suppose you

remain quietly at anchor a day or two, and wait for the frigate?"

"But is she sure to arrive within a couple of days?"

"I can almost swear it."

"Then I will stay," decided Capt. Strong. "And as there is nothing better on my hands, Mr. Consul, I will improve the next hour or two in showing the country to the young friends who are with me."

The agent and governor both lent themselves actively to the views of the commander, and a couple of hours were passed very pleasantly to Arty and Elgie in and around the singular little village. The pay of the governor being only a dollar a day, he could not put on a great deal of style in his entertainment, but he did what he could. The port dues are four dollars per ship, however, and as about one whaleman per week had visited him during the preceding year, he was far from grumbling at his pay.

The visit over, the little party returned to the Bunting. "It'll be dull music to wait here even two days," said Captain Strong, after he had reported the position of affairs to Merrick. "But I want to get rid of those cutthroats, and can see no better way out of the snarl than the consular agent has suggested!"

"Perhaps our neighbor yonder will give us a hint," said Merrick, indicating with a gesture the strange brig on the opposite side of the bay. "I see he has got out a boat and is coming in this direction!"

In the utter absence of all excitement, the approach of the stranger's boat was at once the subject of general attention and inquiry. It was soon alongside the *Bunting*, and a tall, muscular personage climbed up the side and presented himself to the captain.

"My name is Genny," he said. "I command the English brig you see yonder. I am anxious to leave

this place, as you may suppose, but I am short-handed, having lost several of my men upon the west coast and several others being down with the fever. I have accordingly taken the liberty of visiting you to inquire if you can spare me two or three men!"

Captain Strong shook his head regretfully.

"You have come to the wrong market, Captain Genny," he said, smilingly. "I am short-handed myself. The fact is, sir, there has been a mutiny aboard my vessel, and one half of the men with whom I left Salem are in irons!"

"Indeed! Is it possible?" exclaimed Captain Genny, showing a great deal of interest, and even a great excitement. "How did it happen?"

Captain Strong briefly stated the facts, to all of which the visitor listened with the most marked interest.

"You are right in keeping the rascals where they are," he commented. "You can guard them better here than they would be guarded ashore. As to the United States frigate, she will doubtless arrive within a day or two. I shall delay my own departure with a view to getting some assistance from her!"

The visitor had scarcely taken his leave, returning to his own brig, when Captain Strong and Merrick exchanged a few words about him.

"He seems to me to be a dangerous character," said Merrick. "Did you notice how he watched us all, and noted everything!"

"Yes. I thought he was getting a little too intimate when he hinted that he would like to see the prisoners, and that is why I pretended not to understand him. It's all right, however. What harm could he do us if he wished to? All that can be said of him is that—if he's an honest man—mother nature ought to be sued

in heavy damages for attaching such a countenance to his body!"

"My impression is that the said countenance is a fair indication of Capt. Genny's character," declared Merrick. "But, as you say, the fact can do us no harm, and does not in the least concern us."

The matter was dropped here, and nothing more thought about it. The visitor soon regained his brig and vanished into his cabin, at the same instant that his man disappeared into the forecastle, and for an hour thereafter not the least sign of life was presented in that quarter.

"This is getting dull enough," growled Capt. Strong, the next time he saw Merrick. "I have a notion to hire that little launch in the harbor, and give the young folks the treat of a visit to St. Antonio."

"Why don't you do so, Captain?" returned Merrick. "The mutineers are all handcuffed and ironed. A child could manage them. I can look after everything here, and even communicate with the frigate in your place, if she should arrive before you return. You can easily get back in the course of to-morrow."

Once upon this tack, there was no change of course. The little sloop was chartered and provisioned, and Mason and Gillet took charge of her. Plenty of blankets and bedding were put aboard of her. Arty and Elgie were full of glee, of course, at the thought of visiting such a strange little island-world as St. Antonio, and were constantly giving expression to their delight.

"It may be the only chance you will ever have for the trip," said the commander, as he lowered himself into the launch. "In any case, it's a better way of passing the next twenty-four hours than to swelter here at doing nothing." A few minutes later the sloop was standing out of the harbor.

"See!" suddenly cried Elgie. "Captain Genny is looking at us!"

All eyes were instantly turned upon the strange brig. A puff of wind had suddenly veered one of her topsails, disclosing a figure that lay at full length upon the yard. This figure was that of the morning's visitor. He seemed very much interested in the affairs of his neighbor—so much so that he had been watching proceedings with his glass.

"Probably he wishes he could go along," suggested Arty, smilingly. "Or else he is merely killing time by watching us."

The observation did not meet with response, but the attentions of Capt. Genny seemed to leave a shadow in the minds of those he was watching. And it was not without reason.

CHAPTER XIX.

A GENERAL REVENGE.

The trip to St. Antonio was delightful, of course, the return to Genella safely accomplished, and no time was lost in embarking for Porto Grande. Arty and Elgie were not a little fatigued, but they had seen so many novel sights that they could not have failed to be enchanted with the excursion.

"We shall hardly reach the Bunting before dark," observed Capt. Strong, as the party waved their final

adieus to the groups they had left behind them, "but with such a fine evening before us it does not matter."

The launch had not made three miles to the east-ward, however, when a sail was seen to loom out of the haze directly ahead of her, but hull down upon the horizon."

"It is the Bunting," exclaimed Capt. Strong, after a long look at the sail. "And she is coming in this direction.

For a moment he was too puzzled by the discovery to make further comment.

"I see," he then said, partly in answer to he questions of Arty and Elgie, and partly in response to his own internal speculations. "The United States frigate having arrived, Merrick has got rid of our mutineers, and as that finishes our business in these waters, he has decided to get under way and come and meet us—a very good idea," he added, with a sweeping glance at the sea and sky, "as we shall be safer on the brig, in case of another squall, than in our present quarters."

A few minutes' observation of the brig confirmed Capt. Strong in the views he had formed of her movements. The course she was steering was bringing her directly toward the launch, and with the constantly freshening breeze in her favor, it was already clear enough that she would reach the launch about nightfall.

But suddenly came a further discovery to mystify the excursionists.

A second brig had hove in sight—evidently that of Capt. Genny—and was standing steadily to the westward in the wake of the first.

"That's odd," commented Capt. Strong, as soon as he had noticed the fact. "Captain Genny claimed to be English, and to be anxious to proceed to England, but it would look from the present movement as if he were bound for the Gulf of Gumeà."

"An hour more will clear up the mystery," suggested Arty.

"It's all right, of course," said the commander, half to himself. "Capt. Genny may have changed his mind. In any case, he has a right to follow any course he pleases."

It would be an idle task to report all the speculations that were indulged in during the next hour aboard the launch. The curiosity of the watchers gradually became tinged with more or less uneasiness, owing chiefly to the mist which prevented the brig from being seen as distinctly as possible.

"It's clear she's not carrying as much sail as she might," said Capt. Strong to Arty, "and that strikes me as curious. One would say that Merrick would wish to reach us as soon as he can—before dark, if possible."

"He is short-handed, we must remember," returned Arty. "Perhaps he does not wish to shake out too much canvas, for fear of being caught in a squall."

"Good. The remark is sensible," said the commander, with a sigh of relief. "That is doubtless the correct explanation of the matter."

Nearer and nearer came the launch and the brig to each other, but both were now enveloped in a double pall of haze and twilight that prevented Captain Strong and his friends from recognizing any of the few figures visible upon the latter's deck. The two crafts came together just as twilight was yielding to night.

"It is curious they don't hail us," muttered Captain Strong, as the brig loomed up in the fast-gathering shadows immediately before him. "One would even say that they do not see us." The course of the brig was indeed laid so directly upon the launch, that the commander soon called energetically:

"Look out there! Where are you steering? You will run us down."

No answer came from the brig—not the least change in her course.

"Look out there, I say!" cried Capt. Strong, leaping to his feet and seizing the helm of the launch. "You are running us down!"

The fact was not only patent, but it was now easy to see that the act was intentional.

What did it mean?

Before Captain Strong could do more than thunder his warnings again, the brig came crashing down upon him, striking the launch amidships, and thrusting her under the waves as quickly as if she had been made of paper!

In such a collision, only one movement is natural—to jump as far as possible out of the water.

In an instant every person who had been upon the launch was struggling in the water—every one save Captain Strong, who had caught one of the chains under the brig's bowsprit and swung himself aboard her by an extraordinary effort.

It seemed, however, as if those aboard of the brig were anxious to do all they could for the rescue of the struggling victims in the water. A boat was lowered, the brig hove to, and a number of ropes trailed overboard. And so, in a few minutes all the imperiled persons, including Arty and Elgie, were either picked up by the boat or drawn aboard with ropes.

Until now Captain Strong had not spoken a word beyond giving the necessary orders for the rescue of his companions, but it would have been easy to see by his movements that he was consumed with a most violent rage and disgust. How had such a stupid accident been possible?

"Where is Mr. Merrick?" he cried, when he had assured himself that all his late associates had been duly saved or had saved themselves.

"Here, sir," said a figure, advancing in the darkness. The captain started. How strange that responsive voice sounded!

"Bring a light!" he shouted.

The order was obeyed as if by magic, and then a surprise of which the commander would never have even dreamed burst upon him.

The man before him was Medlar!

Never in all his life had Captain Strong been so astonished as at that moment.

"Medlar!" he ejaculated, as if he could not receive the evidence of his senses.

"As you see, Mr. Strong," said the villain, with an insolent and jubilant smile.

"And who are these people around you?" asked Captain Strong, with another start of surprise, as he perceived that at least a dozen rough-looking men had gathered around him.

"These, sir?" returned Medlar. "Oh, they are my men!"

He made a significant gesture as he spoke, and in less then ten seconds thereafter, Captain Strong, despite a desperate resistance, was a helpless prisoner in the hands of the vile swarm, and bound hand and foot.

"Seize the rest of them, all but the blacks and the boy and girl!" added Medlar, as he flashed a glance of villainous triumph upon his followers. "Down with them!"

The task was not an easy one, despite the immense

superiority of the assailants. Gillet and Mason were especially formidable in their struggles. But they were at length secured—the latter in a state of unconsciousness, so severely had he been treated, and the former the recipient of several severe bruises and gashes.

"Take them to the hold!" was the brief order of

Medlar, in a stern voice.

The two sailors were at once removed.

"Where is Mr. Merrick?" asked Capt. Strong.

"He is in the hold—precisely in the same spot and in the same circumstances in which you left me, Mr. Strong, when you set out upon your little excursion."

The commander groaned internally—not so much for himself as for Arty and Elgie, who were now by his side and endeavoring to say or do something to console him in his affliction.

"The thing is a surprise to you, no doubt," continued Medlar, with the natural volubility of his triumph. "The fact is, your expected frigate has not yet put in an appearance. But excuse me a moment—I must send up a rocket for the benefit of my ally."

He hastened to execute this purpose.

"That is to let Genny know that I have you in safe keeping," observed the villain, as he came back to Capt. Strong.

"Genny is acting with you, then?" asked the commander, as he began recalling mentally the particulars

of the visit that personage had made him.

"Certainly, Genny is acting with me," affirmed Medlar, complacently. "The fact is, he and I have long been old friends, as much as the circumstance may take you by surprise. It was once my good fortune to save Genny's life. And who do you suppose Capt. Genny really is?"

"Some infamous villain, no doubt," responded Capt.

Strong, bitterly,

"He is no less a personage than the notorious slave-trader, De Soto," affirmed Medlar, in a consequential voice, "and the way in which I happened to save his life was by hiding him in an empty cask in the hold of the schooner of which I was in charge when he was being hunted by a boat's crew from one of Uncle Sam's cruisers, the last time I was in the Bight of Benin."

"A worthy associate, I must say."

"And a very profitable one, too," declared Medlar, without noticing the bitterness of Capt. Strong's observation. "It was upon the occasion in question that Genny De Soto and I learned to appreciate each other—upon that occasion, in fact, that he suggested to me the little transaction with which I have been busy ever since we left Salem."

"You mean the seizure of the brig?"

" Exactly—the seizure of the brig."

"It is a bold project for even De Soto," said the commander. "You can hardly have expected to seize the brig under a bushel?"

"Well, why not, if you please? Who is to know it? Are not hundreds of vessels lost every year in the different waters of the world—vessels that are never even heard from after leaving port—and of these hundreds, how many, do you suppose, are seized for one cause or another by the lawless ruffians aboard of them, and carried off to snug retreats? Many a ship that is supposed to have foundered, or to have encountered an iceberg. has in reality been seized, with all the treasures aboard of her, by a band of cut-throats shipping as crew in her!"

If Capt. Strong had any doubts of the correctness of these views, he did not express them.

"And so you expect to seize the Bunting and get off

without even being suspected?" he asked, after a thoughtful pause.

"Certainly—I expect to go my ways unmolested," declared Medlar, complacently. "But, to be sure, I shall take my little precautions."

"Is not your De Soto or Genny—whatever you call him—following us?" asked the commander.

"Certainly. We are going to the west coast together, and will then push out for the Brazils or Cuba with a fine lot of ebony-wood. Ha, ha!" and the villain laughed boisterously, "how well our little surprise was managed. Genny has been anchored at Porto Grande a week, waiting for me, for it was agreed that I should come there with the Bunting. Instead of being shorthanded as represented, Genny had men enough with him to man two or three such brigs as this, for the reason that he is a man of pluck, and intends to fight for his rights in what he believes to be a legitimate branch of commerce. The vessel he's in was honestly bought of an old African trader who had made up his mind to retire from the business. Genny likes me, even as I like him, and I haven't the least doubt that we shall do a great business together."

Capt. Strong had heard quite enough of the villain's easy confidences, and would have gladly questioned him about more important matters, and especially about the fates reserved for Arty and Elgie and himself. He was spared all direct questions upon this point, however, by Medlar, who roused himself from a brief abstraction, and said:

"You will understand, Mr. Strong, that a great many cares are pressing upon me at this moment, and will excuse me from any further remarks at present. There is, doubtless, plenty of room for you in the hold, with Merrick and the rest, and so the boys can now remove

you thither, and make you as comfortable as your straitened circumstances will permit."

At a nod from him, two of the stalwart ruffians present at once laid hands upon the commander to bear him to his prison.

"One moment," cried Captain Strong, turning to Medlar; "what do you intend to do with these poor children?"

"Poor children!" echoed Medlar, with a frightful oath. "A poor child' indeed is that boy! Perhaps you don't recall the breakfast he gave us the other day in mid-ocean?"

"It was Cuffee or Cuddle who drugged the coffee on that occasion."

"Cuffee or Cuddle! Why, those black rascals have no more backbone than a tadpole. They never would have thought of such a measure, and still less would have dared to take a step toward carrying it out. I don't want any of your gammon on the subject of that breakfast, Mr. Strong. It was that 'poor child' that planned the thing—that 'poor child' who stood behind the blackamoors and actually forced them to carry out his purpose. And he'll have to settle for his hash before I am done with him, you may be certain!"

The words and manner of the ruffian struck a chill to the commander's heart.

"In any case," he said, "you must remember that the lad was strictly within his rights, whatever he did. Far from blaming him for his courage, you should honor him!"

"Oh, I will honor him fast enough," said Medlar, in a husky voice, and with a face black as a thunder-cloud. "He shall not want a suitable reward for his courage, I can assure you!"

Repeating his silent orders to his minions, they bore

the captain to the hold despite the earnest intercessions of Arty and Elgie, who were even denied the poor privilege of sharing his prison.

"No, my youngsters," said Medlar, when he was alone with the young couple, "I have other views for you. For the moment, you will occupy your old quarters in the cabin!"

Leading the way thither, he added:

"I shall be very busy for the next day or two, and I hope you will keep out of my sight as much as possible, and say nothing to me!"

"One question," said Arty. "What do you intend to do with Captain Strong?"

"That is my affair!"

"Where are Cuddle and Cuffee?"

"I flung them both overboard the minute Genny and his men released me."

The declaration was doubly false; the two blacks having flung themselves overboard at the very commencement of the attack, and having escaped to the shore.

"And as I have now answered two questions for you, instead of one, as you proposed, you will excuse me from any further attendance. All you have to do is to make yourself at home here—for the present."

He went on deck, securing the entrance behind him. His manner was so indicative of a savage hatred that Arty and Elgie shuddered.

"Oh, he will kill us!" murmured the girl, as she threw herself into Arty's arms.

"Perhaps not," was all the boy could say in reply. "And perhaps he may do worse—kill me and save you alive."

The oppression of their thoughts during the next few hours can be but faintly imagined. They talked until they had schooled themselves into something like equanimity, and then retired to their respective state-rooms, but not to sleep.

It was not long after their separation that Medlar looked into the cabin, listened a moment, and then quietly withdrew.

"All is quiet there," he said to himself. "The youngsters are doubtless asleep."

The whole gang of conspirators were now upon deck, all appearing intent upon some sinister project.

"Out with the boat now, Mr. Rodding," said Medlar to his executive. "We may as well be rid of them."

The order was executed in profound silence, the blocks having been especially greased for the measure.

"Bring up the prisoners!" then commanded Medlar. A couple of minutes sufficed for the execution of the order.

"As I told you, Mr. Strong," said Medlar, malignantly, "I must take my little precautions. I am going to send you and your faithful hounds adrift. Doubtless you will be carried straight to St. Vincent," he added, mockingly. "But if you are you needn't blame me."

"You are free to murder us, I suppose," answered the commander, scornfully. "But we shall at least have the privilege of dying like men! Remember, however, that for every wrong you may do those helpless children you will be called to a fearful account!"

"Enough of your preaching," exclaimed Medlar, turning away. "It won't help them any more than it helps you."

At a gesture his men began removing the prisoners to the boat. The task was not a long one, nor did it present the least difficulty. Ironed and handcuffed as they were, the victims could not oppose the least resistance.

"There you are!" said Medlar, with an infernal chuckle, when Capt. Strong had been placed in the boat, thus completing its load "A long good-night to you!"

He cast off the boat as he spoke, and it went adrift upon the dark waters.

"That ends them," added Medlar, as the frail craft receded from his view. "In ten minutes they will be under."

Giving a few orders to Rodding, he proceeded to the cabin, took possession of the quarters so lately occupied by Capt. Strong, and within five minutes thereafter was sleeping as soundly as if no shadow of crime had ever rested upon him.

His first work in the morning was to assure Arty and Elgie that Capt. Strong and the rest had made their escape during the night in one of the brig's boats. The young couple would not believe him, but when he had shown them through the hold and every portion of the ship, they could not fail to recognize the absence of their friends and to form a suspicion of the real facts in the case. For a few hours thereafter, they were completely crushed by their many and terrible afflictions.

Day after day the *Bunting* stood on her course to the southward, closely followed by the brig belonging to De Soto. Beyond keeping their fears alive with sundry ominous threats, Medlar said very little to the young couple. But at length, one afternoon, the brig arrived in a sort of river channel between two low coasts and came to anchor. Medlar and a couple of his men went to the southernmost of these low coasts in a boat, returning just at nightfall.

"Your hash is settled, my young friends," he said, the moment his eyes rested upon Arty and Elgie. "I have sold you." The couple looked at him in as much wonder as consternation.

"How sold us?" asked Arty.

"To an old king who resides upon the shore ahead of us. And I am now ready to transfer you to your new owners. If there is anything in your state-rooms that you want, my young friends, be lively about getting it, for in just three minutes you will be off to your new master."

Both Arty and Elgie were too full of horror for remonstrance or entreaty. In good truth it seemed to them that no fate could be worse than to live with the wretches around them. They accordingly obeyed all the orders given them by Medlar, soon taking their places in the boat alongside. A half-hour's row brought them to a silent and marshy shore, which seemed scarcely higher than the water.

"Tumble out!" cried Medlar as the boat touched the beach.

The young couple obeyed in silence.

"The old king will soon come for you," said Medlar, in such a tone of mockery as to provoke a loud burst of laughter from his men. "He isn't far from you! You will see him soon enough!"

And with this he went his way, soon vanishing from the view of his victims.



CHAPTER XX.

THE YOUNG COUPLE IN SLAVERY.

The young couple did not move or speak until the flashing of the oars of Medlar's boat had been lost in the roar of the waters.

"They have really left us," then murmured Elgie.

"And where?" returned Arty.

Both strained their eyes into the darkness reigning around them.

"We appear to be upon an island," continued Elgie, as she nestled nearer to her companion in a profound terror. "There is water all around us, I think."

"It appears so, Elgie. I think we are upon one of those low, alluvial islands which outlie several of the great African rivers, and particularly the Gambia. I am going to make an effort to learn our surroundings."

"Be careful, Arty."

"Yes, I will. Remain just where you are. Don't stir till I come back again."

"Oh, Arty, I am afraid something will happen to you!" cried Elgie. "It is so dark here—so lonely! Everything looks so strange! Medlar said the old king is near us."

"I mean to see where the old king is, and what he is," said Arty, stoutly. "Do not fear for me. I will come back at the first sign of trouble. Be brave, dear."

Moving away slowly from the shore, Arty soon found himself in some low bushes by which his path was well nigh hidden. In less than a minute, and before he had gone a score of yards, the ground became suddenly absent from beneath his feet, and he tumbled into a pool of water which enveloped him to his shoulders.

A scream burst from Elgie, in response to his involuntary cry, but he promptly scrambled out of the watery pitfall, at the same time reassuring the girl with a few cheerful words. A second plash having succeeded that caused by his tumble, however, he came to the conclusion that there were alligators in the marshy pools before him, and lost no time in taking his way back to Elgie.

"It's impossible to stir a step in that direction," he declared. "We must wait until morning."

"Or until the old king comes for us!"

"I do not believe there is any old king here at all," declared the boy, earnestly. "My opinion is that Medlar has placed us upon an uninhabited island to die!"

The girl's heart fluttered wildly at the assurance.

"That would be horrible," she murmured. "But it would be just like him!"

"It is the only explanation I can give of his setting us ashore," continued Arty. "You know how he hates us. You know, too, that he turned Captain Strong and the rest adrift in a little boat, than which act there can be no more dreadful murder. Beyond all question, he has set us ashore here to die!"

Elgie was appalled at this view of the case—too appalled to reply instantly.

"In any case, we had better remain just where we are until morning; had we not?" she finally demanded.

"Yes, until morning, unless the old king should come

for us, or something else should happen. Are you cold?"

"No; only so scared."

"Don't be afraid, Elgie," said Arty, drawing her head to his shoulder. "I will take care of you. I brought a pistol and a knife from the brig, and anybody who undertakes to harm you will see trouble!"

"How cold and damp it is here!" sighed the girl.

"And you are all in a shiver, Arty! I have read that it is dangerous to be near or upon these African rivers, and especially to get wet."

"Never mind all that," said the boy, hopefully.

"This water is salt. We are too near the sea for fevers.

I shall be all right in a few minutes!"

"You must get under my cloak, Arty. What would become of us if you should get sick? Hark! is not that the old king coming?"

The plash which had startled the girl was repeated, but the young couple could not make out its cause. Probably it was some river-monster prowling or sporting near them. Finding that nothing came near them the couple resumed their conversation.

It would be idle to detail the horrors of the long night that followed—its numerous alarms, its unseen terrors, its strange sights and sounds. Not once during the night did either of the unfortunates close their eyes in sleep. Slowly the hours dragged away, one more painful than another. Elgie as well as Arty was almost constantly in a shiver, especially in the hour or two preceding the advent of a new day.

But at last a dull light began to break through the canopy of darkness, and the couple saluted its every new beam with thankfulness and hope. Very slowly the sable pall lifted, and as slowly was the circle of their vision extended, until at length the advent of the

sun from behind a bank of clouds dissipated the remaining shadows of the night and cast a broad sheen of light around them.

For several minutes after the scene in which they were figuring was thus unfolded to their gaze did the young couple continue to gaze inquiringly around in silence.

"It is as I supposed," then said Arty. "We are upon an island—quite a large one—the low shores of which are more or less cut up with salt water lagoons. See how sandy the soil is—how stunted the vegetation! Not a house or hut is in sight—no sign of one—not the least trace of a human being!"

"It must be, then, that we are upon an uninhabited island, as you supposed, Arty," returned the girl.

"We must see," said Arty, briefly. "Let's walk away toward that sand-knoll yonder—the highest ground in sight."

Reaching the knoll in question, the couple bestowed another long glance of inquiry around them. The interior of the island was a vast, sandy plain, dotted here and there with dwarfish trees, and containing many sunken pools and inlets of salt water. No trace of habitation was yet visible.

"It's a larger island than I supposed," said Arty, with an additional thrill of anxiety. "As many miles as we can see to the eastward, I do not see any end to it. The first thing," he added, moistening his lips with his tongue, "is for us to find some fresh water and something to eat."

The girl sighed profoundly.

"I have my doubts about finding either food or drink," she murmured.

The couple wandered on and on under the hot African sun, which had now commenced pouring its bright rays upon them. Many were the pools of water they sought and tasted, only to find them wholly salt or too brackish for use. Not the least trace of a spring or river was discovered. A couple of hours thus passed seemed an age to the young couple.

"I see now to what old king Medlar made allusion!" exclaimed Arty, bitterly, as he threw himself under a clump of bushes for protection from the rays of the sun.

"The name of that old king is Death."

Elgie paled with the realization of the truth.

"Yes, that is what Medlar meant," she said. "Not a soul is near us—not even a trace of human beings.

For a long time they remained motionless in their inadequate shelter, a prey to the most distressing thoughts and sensations.

"We will not die without an effort, Elgie," said Arty at last, arising to his feet. "If we find nothing to eat or drink here, we must push on to some other place."

The slow and toilsome march now entered upon was prosecuted for hours without other result than finding a few swallows of water in the hollow of a rock. As to fruits or berries—anything whatever to eat—not the least sign was offered.

"We must strike out for the shore to the south of us," said Arty, huskily. "The 'old king' would find us here before this time to-morrow. Perhaps we can find a dead fish or bird on the coast—something cast up by the sea for our benefit."

Still more slowly than before, the exhausted couple dragged their weary footsteps in the direction suggested by Arty. It was a long and almost despairing struggle, and when they at last reached the white beach, they found it as parched and destitute as any spot they had previously visited.

"We must die now!" cried Elgie, in blank despair, as she sank upon the desolate shore.

"Perhaps not," returned Arty, assuming the semblance of hope. "There is another island, you see, to the southeast of us, and only a few miles from us. If we could find a boat hereabouts—"

Elgie interrupted him with a murmur of despair.

"How could there be a boat here when there are no inhabitants?" she asked.

"One may have drifted here from some ship, or been left here by some hunter or runaway sailor," returned Arty. "At any rate, I think I see a boat beyond those rocks yonder, and that is why I spoke as I did, Elgie."

"Oh, you see a boat, Arty?"

"I am almost sure that I do. Remain quiet a few moments, and I will see what it is."

The boy walked along the beach with renewed animation, and soon returned smiling.

"It is a boat," he announced, joyfully. "One of those African canoes of which Captain Strong was telling us. I saw by throwing some sticks into the water that the current sets directly toward the southeast, and consequently almost in a line toward that island. There is a paddle in the canoe, and if you are willing to venture with me, Elgie—"

"Let's start immediately, Arty," proposed Elgie, quickly. "We have only death to look forward to here. It's our only chance!"

The couple were soon afloat. The canoe took nearly the direction expected, and Arty aided its progress with his paddle. Very slowly, indeed, but with constant motion, it neared the second and inner island, and in due course the couple perceived several black figures in commotion upon one of the low bluffs in the distance.

"There are inhabitants there," cried Elgie. "And they see us."

"Yes," assented Arty. "And they seem to be launching a canoe. Perhaps they are coming to meet us."

This was the last coherent remark made by Arty Seaborn for months. Long ere the natives he had seen had reached his side, he was delirious with an African fever.

When he again became conscious of his surroundings, he found himself in a long and narrow hut, with an earthern floor. He was lying on a rude cot of straw, with his head near a hole in the wall answering to a window. Beside him sat Elgie, looking so pale and thin and altered that his first sensation was one of wondering terror.

"Why, where are we, Elgie?" he cried, starting up wildly. "What has happened?"

The girl could not immediately reply. Only joyous sobs burst from her as she threw her arms around Arty's neck, and clung to him convulsively.

"Oh, you know me at last!" she finally articulated.

"Know you?" repeated Arty, wonderingly. "What do you mean?"

"We have both been very ill, Arty—you the sickest of the two. How long do you suppose we have been in this cabin? More than four months since that awful night when Medlar put us upon an uninhabited island to die!"

Arty was speechless with amazement for a full minute.

"And we have been so sick as that?" he then murmured.

"Yes, and from all I can comprehend of the language of these people, it's a wonder that we did not die! It

has been about two weeks since I became conscious of my whereabouts:"

At the gesture made by the girl, Arty sent a glance around him. He saw that several negro women of different ages were present, and regarding him with a joyous surprise.

"Who are they?" he asked.

"They are the wives of king Jeeba, the principal chief of this island," replied Elgie. "The subjects of Teeba are not more than two hundred in number. Jeeba and all the rest regard us as strange idols, and I have learned enough of their gibberish to know that they mean to keep us here always. We have been watched every day and night since our arrival. They seem to have been kind to us in their way, however, and I am sure their old women must have doctored us with a great deal of skill to bring us through those dreadful fevers!"

The strangeness of these revelations to Arty can be imagined. The four months preceding that moment were all a blank to him.

"Have you seen anything of a ship since you recovered?" asked the boy, as he looked through the opening far out upon the blue waters.

"Not the least sign of one. It seems that we are in the midst of a low archipelago of islands which are generally avoided on account of shoals and currents."

"But don't white people ever come here—at least the slave-traders?"

"As near as I can understand these people," returned the girl, "there has not been a white man here in several years."

"And in what light do they regard us?"

"As slaves, Arty. You see that they have already set me to work," and she held up to view a rude sort of knitting with which she was busy. "And Jeeba has for some days been delighted with the improvement in your condition, declaring that you shall be his chief personal attendant, even as I am already the slave of his principal queen."

The slaves of a pretty negro despot and barbarian! What more was wanted to fill the soul of Arty Seaborn with inexpressible horror?

CHAPTER XXI.

IDA RUNNEL.

It was five years later than the events recorded in the preceding pages.

The scene was one of those far-away and littleheard of islands which stand as sentries upon the boundaries of the New World.

It was, in fact, the very island off which Christopher Columbus found himself on the morning of the 12th of October, 1492.

It is generally called Wattling's Island.

It is only a few miles in extent, and contains about five hundred inhabitants, who constitute a simple and inoffensive people, living rather upon the outskirts of the world than in it, taking little part in the stirring events of the age, ignoring and ignored—as solitary a people, in a word, as can be found outside of the great deserts of the Poles and those of Sahara and Siberia.

And yet in this rustic world there are still marvelous charms and beauties, as upon that ever memorable

morning when the eyes of the great and illustrious father of American navigation first beheld it.

There is no actual harbor, to be sure, a port for all seasons and winds—only anchorages, where ships can remain for a few hours in pleasant weather. But there are, none the less, plenty of creeks and coves all along the shores, where, when the waters are calm, little skiffs can be safely and conveniently launched, and where one may while away an hour as charmingly as if upon the bosom of some small lake in the interior of the country.

The aspect of the island was doubtless far different in the days of Columbus. It is even believed that a goodly portion of it, as he saw it, has since been swallowed up by the ocean, which often beats upon it with tremendous fury.

Be this as it may, there is still a good anchorage off the southern extremity of the island, and as fair a landscape all along the two shores to the northward as any one would ever care to look upon.

Nestled amid the verdure crowning one of the loveliest slopes in this quarter of the island, was a large and roomy cottage, only a story in height, in which the rude and simple thatch-work of the tropics had been graciously blended with the more pretentious architecture of the north.

This cottage was the most elegant and complete edifice ever seen in the island.

To begin with the roadstead itself, there was none other like it. The water was so clear that the silvery sands at its bottom could be plainly seen, and yet until within a few rods of the beach, they were deep enough to float large vessels. The encircling reefs which debar approach to long stretches of the shore were here entirely uninterrupted.

And then the wide lawn which sloped so gently down to the sea from the cottage, was a marvel in its way—clean, vigorous, eternally fresh, and just enough shaded with trees and flowering shrubs to be retired and private, at the same time that the broad open spaces allowed the sunshine and free air their gayest course throughout the whole domain.

A glorious summer day was drawing to a close, and the whole ocean to the south and west of this island manor was being gloriously tinged with a thousand varying hues by nature's great pencil, when a young girl of the rarest loveliness emerged from the wide portal of the cottage we have designated, and sauntered thoughtfully down a shaded path leading nearly directly to the edge of the water.

The age of this fair being could not have exceeded seventeen years, but her countenance displayed lines of thought and feeling which are seldom seen upon the features of girls of her age. There was in her very walk something suggestive of loneliness and unrest, as if her. whole being was instinct with the solitude around her

A certain shadow of desolation seemed to rest upon her.

"Another night," she murmured, with a deep sigh, as she sank upon the rustic seat in a little dell not far from the water's edge. "And so the days come and go in unvarying monotony. No society, no friends, nobody to love, none to care for me! And this is existence! Is it for this that I was created? Oh, why was I born?"

The sweet voice rang out upon the evening air like a wail.

"And yet there is, as it seems to me, a world beyond the seas in which I could be happy," she continued, more and more regretfully. "Will papa ever take me to that world as he has promised? Why is he ever away from me? Why does he not keep me with him as other fathers do? And what is the great mystery of my life that he is so long keeping from me?"

"Are you there, Miss Ida?" suddenly called a voice from a clump of radiant shrubs a few rods further up

the slope.

"Yes, Althie," answered the girl, with a sigh. "It is my hour, you know," and she waved a fair, jewelled hand towards the radiance glorifying the heavens. "Another day is dying, and what can I do but mourn, as usual, that it has brought me no happiness."

"Still as sad as ever, I see," murmured the woman addressed as Althie, as she advanced into view and drew near the girl. "Is there no cure for your melancholy?"

"Only one, Althie-death!"

Althie shuddered at the quiet vehemence with which this brief response was uttered.

"You cannot mean what you say, Miss Ida," she said, while her features worked uneasily.

"Yes, I mean it, Althie. I wish that I were dead!"

Seating herself upon the grassy sward near the girl, Althie scanned the fair features before her still more earnestly.

"Death comes only too soon to all of us," she said, beating the ground nervously with her foot. "And that a mere child like you should wish to have done with the world is simply a madness."

"You think so? Then we need not discuss the matter, Althie. Let us talk of the dull realities of our lot. Have you the least idea when my father will deign to look in upon us for a few minutes again?"

"I suppose there is no certainty in the premises," said Althie, "but I expect him at any moment. It has been nearly a year since he was here."

"And he stayed a whole day with us—coming from

Heaven knows where, and going Heaven knows whither. He is a model of a father, isn't he, Althie?"

Before making any reply to this bitter question, Althie once more brought a scrutinizing gaze to bear upon the girl's features. This scrutiny was now furtive, however, and not without a trace of alarm in it.

"It is for fathers to come and go as they please, Miss Ida, I suppose," she soon said. "As to Mr. Runnel, he has been a good father to you, it seems to me—has given you a beautiful home, with every comfort and luxury, and has even supplied you, at different times, with the best of instructors in every branch of knowledge and in every accomplishment—"

The words were suddenly interrupted at this point, and then Althie uttered wild screams of terror, springing to her feet and clasping her hand to one of her bare arms:

"Oh, I am bitten!" she panted.

"Bitten? By what, Althie?" cried Miss Ida, as she also hastily arose.

"By one of those poisonous vipers Marcos saw about the place," cried Althie. "Yes, there it goes now!"

Her screams rang out again, more wildly than ever. The girl's eyes followed the outstretched hand of Althie just in time to see a serpent, small but hideous, hurrying into the adjacent bushes and vanishing in the darkness.

"Are you sure he bit you?" asked Ida.

"Sure? He glided from this overhanging bush directly upon my arm, biting me the instant he touched me!"

"Then help must be had instantly!" cried Ida.
"Where are Marcos and Matty?"

At the wild cries which now came from the girl as well as from Althie, a middle-aged negro couple, hus-

band and wife, the servants of the household, came hurrying to the scene of alarm.

They were both nearly paralyzed with terror for a few

moments, on learning what had happened.

"Only whiskey can cure one of those bites," then said Marcos, "and that not always. The last one bitten—old Mrs. Sawyer—died within half an hour afterwards!"

The observation was as natural as thoughtless, but it at once plunged Althie into a state of the wildest despair.

"I shall die, too!" she cried. "Quick, Marcos! run for some whiskey—to my closet!"

Marcos made as quick a flight to the house and back as he could, but when he returned Althie was lying at full length upon the sward, in a state of prostration approaching unconsciousness.

A drink of whiskey revived her a little, and with the assistance of Matty and Ida she arose to a sitting posture, looking around upon them, in the light of a lantern Marcos had brought from the dwelling.

"Oh, I know that I am going to die!" she panted.

"Nonsense," returned Ida. "Drink more of the whiskey. It was thoughtless of Marcos to scare you so."

"He uttered the truth, Miss Ida. I am going to die, and the reason is—I am such a wicked woman! I deserve to die, Miss Ida, and I shall!"

"Hush! do not talk in this cruel manner!" enjoined Ida. "Remember how kind you have been to me all these years, the only mother I have ever known—"

Althie interrupted the remark with wild moans, rocking herself to and fro. "Oh, do not talk in that way," she exclaimed, wringing her hands. "I have been a wicked and cruel woman all these years, Miss Ida—your jailer! But there is yet time before I die to undo a portion of my wrong-doing. Mr. Runnel is not your father—"

The girl put her hand softly over the mouth of the excited woman, and said in the most soothing of voices:

"There! there! Do not talk in that way any more, Althie!"

"But I must speak," burst forth the suffering woman, passionately. "My mind is not wandering as you suppose, although it may soon do so. Hear and mark well my last words to you. Mr. Runnel is not your father, nor is he a great merchant, as he and I have both declared to you so often. He is the Runnel of whom you were speaking lately with so much horror—the notorious slave-trader."

At this clear and intelligent statement, every particle of blood seemed to recede from the features of Ida Runnel.

"Not my father!" she cried. "How do you know that, Althie?"

"Because I have known Mr. Runnel ever since he was a boy. He and I went to the same school, and he has always maintained a constant acquaintance with me. But he is not your father, I say. He has never been married."

The shock this simple exposition of facts gave the girl brought a rosy hue back to her features.

"Are you sure there is no mistake, Althie?" she demanded. "Is—is that notorious slaver captain the same man who comes here in the character of my father?"

"The very same!"

"Then who am I, Althie?"

"I-I will tell you!"

The sufferer sank back again, so weak, so utterly prostrated that she could not speak or move hand or foot.

"She's really going to die!" whispered Marcos,

scared and trembling. "I've seen all this before. She acts just as Mrs. Sawyer did. Perhaps this will help her a little!"

He applied his bottle freely to Althie's lips, but she did not come out of the comatose state into which she had fallen. Probably fear and remorse had a great deal to do with the virulence with which the poison of the reptile manifested itself in her system. Be that as it may, she never spoke intelligently again. Twice only she seemed to be conscious that she was leaving a great secret uncommunicated, and it was pitiful on both occasions to see with what desperate energy she tried to break through the destroying fetters which had settled upon her.

Gradually her moans became fewer and weaker, and at last they ceased altogether. Not half an hour intervened between the moment of her being bitten and that of her death.

"Poor thing!" murmured Ida Runnel, as she arose and turned away. "I will remember only her good qualities, and banish far from me the recollection of all that she has done amiss. Take charge of everything, Matty—you and Marcos. Good-night to you both."

And with this the wild-eyed girl glided nearer to the water, upon which the dark veil of night had now fully settled.

CHAPTER XXII.

"LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM."

The burial of Althie took place upon the afternoon succeeding her death. Ida Runnel did not disdain to figure as chief mourner, notwithstanding the revelations

which had been made to her of the dead woman's lifelong falsehood and duplicity.

"She was paid to lie," said the girl to herself, with her usual straightforward bitterness, "and the man who calls himself my father paid her. Be the guilt to him and not to her. She had her living to make, and many is the remorseful kindness for which I am indebted to her, as I can now see in looking back in my memory. Peace to her ashes!"

That this was not a bad view of the case for a young head of seventeen years must be very generally conceded.

The funeral was over, and Ida Runnel turned away from the formal faces and phrases in attendance, and returned quietly to her cottage without so much as betraying by a look the dark unrest which was now brooding more heavily than ever upon her spirits. To whom could she speak of her inborn desolation? To whom could she unseal the bitter fountain of her soul? She was wise enough to "suffer and be strong."

Wise enough—oh, wise enough !—to look beyond all the little nothingness of the earth's fair decay and shameful glory, and send her thoughts upon wings of light to the innermost holies of the great temple.

The funeral was over and Ida Runnel was more alone than ever, more a mystery to herself and others, more a child of solitude and unrest, and yet more an angel of sweetness and purity amid her life's giant shadows. A day or two she missed Althie from the constant watch and ward of many long years, and for a few hours she half fancied that something was missing from her life, but the second sober sentiment of her soul assured her that there had been no essential connection between her own life and that which had so suddenly gone out in darkness.

The week succeeding Althie's death was passed by Ida Runnel in a quiet apathy, which filled the souls of her devoted servants, Marcos and Matty, with a keen sense of alarm. She came and went like a shadow, saying little, eating little, seldom indulging in a snatch of song or in a strain of music, and scarcely pausing to pluck a flower from her pathway. As for books, she never looked into one. What was a book to her? to her who was feeling the vast revelations of her own soul?

But at length there came an hour which roused that lone spirit from its lethargy of desolation—the initial hour of a West-Indian tempest.

In the wild puffs of wind, as in the weird calms, in the hollow murmurs of the waves as in their changing hues, in the hurried flight of sea birds seeking their coverts, in the clouds which sped in skurrying masses across the face of the heavens, in the hush and quiet of the whole face of nature, it was easy for Ida Runnel to divine that a storm of unusual power was brewing.

And in the sibyl-like illuminations which sped over the girl's face, as she scanned the portents unrolled before her, could have been read how deeply and strangely and grandly the strong passions of her soul went out in unison with those signs of nature's impending battle.

With her long hair floating like a glorious mantle around her pearly neck and shoulders, with movements as light and graceful as those of the sunniest warblers in the wilderness of flowers and sweets she was traversing, with thrills of the grander emotions writing themselves in living light upon her gloriously beautiful features, she seemed the Goddess of the creations around her.

"The night will be fearful, Miss Runnel," said Marcos, meeting her upon the shore and inclining himself

with the deepest respect. "The tempest will even burst upon us within a few minutes. Had you not better remain within doors?"

"Good Marcos!" returned Ida, as she halted a moment and regarded her faithful servant with the kindliest gaze, "I know that you think only of my comfort and safety. But I must have my little stroll by myself, as usual. It seems to me that I am in danger of suffocation," and she passed a jewelled hand swiftly over her throat. "I must have the fresh air!"

"Then let Matty and I come too, Miss Ida! Let us be near you!"

The girl smiled indulgently, as she said:

"I have no objections to that, I am sure, Marcos. You and Matty know how to be near me without intruding. Walk in the same direction that I do, if you will. But one question first, Marcos. Have you any idea as to the time when my—when he—Mr. Runnel—when he will be here again?"

"Not the least idea, Miss Ida!"

"One question more, Marcos. Are you aware of the great secret—of my birth, parentage, identity, real name, or history?"

"Only in so far as we have seen, Miss Ida. Only so far as we heard from Althie a few moments before her death!"

"Then Mr. Runnel has told you nothing?"

"Not the least word, Miss Ida. He found us in South Carolina, a free couple, when you were a little girl so high," and he raised his hand to about the height of a child of two years, "and brought us here to assist Althie in taking care of you, and here we have been from that day to this."

"Do you know who Mr. Runnel really is?"

"Only that he says he is your father, and that his

name is Runnel,' was the reply. "There are things he has told us, but we know nothing as to their truth or—"

He suddenly checked himself.

- "Their truth or falsehood, you were about to say, Marcos."
 - "Yes, Miss Ida-pardon the freedom."
 - "Mr. Runnel pays you liberally, does he not?"
 - "About the usual wages."
 - "And how do you like him?"
- "Pardon me, Miss Ida. I have seen very little -of him."
 - "And that little?"
 - "I-I would rather not say," stammered Marcos.
 - "And why so?"
- "Because—because he may be your father, after all."
- "Well, well, Marcos," commented Ida, after a brief pause, "I am not pressing you for your opinions. I am merely—looking around."

She moved lightly away as she spoke, and was seen a couple of minutes thereafter upon one of the highest rocks upon the shore, looking far out upon the waters. Marcos and Mattie had scarcely taken a good view of her when the tempest burst over the island.

In the height of the wild scene that succeeded, Ida was startled by hearing a cry of distress from the beach at the foot of the cliff upon which she had taken shelter, and was prompt to recognize the nature of that cry.

"It is some unfortunate sailor," she said to herself, as she started to her feet, all aglow with sympathy. "I must see who he is."

Descending by a steep and narrow path to the beach, she hastened in the direction from which the sound had come, and was promptly guided to its source by its repetitions,

The person in distress lay unconscious upon the sands, whither he had been violently hurled by the earlier gusts of the tempest. A call from the girl brought Marcos and Matty to the spot.

"Take him up to the house," enjoined Ida. "Be as careful of him as possible."

The transit was soon made.

Once in the spacious living-room of the cottage, the doors were all carefully secured, and the patient was laid upon a large and easy lounge that occupied one corner of the apartment.

He seemed at first glance a mere youth, so fair was his complexion, so boy-like the curls that covered his beautifully shaped head in profusion, so delicately cut his every feature. But a closer view of the finely-formed and compact figure, and especially of the strong and hardy lines of his classical face, would have told the observer that only years and grave responsibilities could have given him such a striking and commanding appearance.

He was, in fact, not far from twenty years of age, tall and stalwart, evidently as distinguished for agility as for strength, and having that air of culture and refinement which instantly stamps the possessor as a gentleman.

"He is evidently an officer of the navy," observed Ida. "But how has he come here, in that case, and what has become of his vessel?"

While answering these questions, she busied herself deftly with the young stranger's restoration.

"There was no vessel in sight, Miss Runnel," remarked Marcos—"no sign of any, at the moment of the tempest's beginning. He can have come in no vessel."

"Then it's very strange, is it not?"

"Very, indeed! But he will soon be able to speak for himself. See! he is coming to himself."

Within five minutes from that moment the young stranger was sitting up in the midst of his rescuers, and looking around upon them with a countenance as expressive of gratitude as of satisfaction.

"I am not dead, then, after all!" he exclaimed in a full and cheery voice, as his bright eyes rested fixedly upon the countenance of Miss Runnel. "The first impression to that effect was natural enough, however. I took you for an angel."

The compliment, and the graceful spirit with which it was uttered, caused Ida to blush to her temples.

Marcos and Matty exchanged glances full of significance.

"We have a great deal to do, old man," said the latter, arising, "and the sooner we are about it the better."

They left the apartment together, pretending not to hear the faltering voice with which Ida suggested that at least one of them should remain to perform any office the young stranger might require at their hands.

"At last!" breathed Marcos to his wife, as they both reached their especial domain, the rambling little kitchen—"at last Miss Ida has a lover!"

"And a noble young gentleman he is," returned Matty. "If ever there was a case of love at first sight, here it is."

The first few moments that followed the withdrawal of the couple were moments of silence to those behind them. Ida had not recovered from the confusion into which the remark of the guest had thrown her, and he was still scanning her face with much of the wondering admiration with which a saint regards the emblem of his faith.

"It is little they can do for me," said the young stranger, still smiling, as he nodded his head in the direction taken by Marcos and Matty. "I am too seriously wounded."

"Wounded?" echoed Ida, starting to her feet excitedly. "How? Where?"

The stranger uttered a laugh that was like the rippling of a pellucid torrent.

"Fortunately I have escaped from the sea with a few cuts and bruises, more or less severe," said the stranger; "but why is it that your gaze moves me to the depths of my soul? Who are you? How came you in this out-of-the-way corner of the world? What is your name and history?"

An answering smile illuminated Ida's features.

"Those are the very questions I have been asking myself continually for some days and weeks past!"

"What! a mystery!" cried the stranger. "You do not know who you are?"

"No more than I know, sir, who you are!"

"Bravo! the cut direct!" continued the stranger, from whose still pallid countenance every trace of pain had vanished as if by enchantment. "Excuse me for not having mentioned my identity sooner. I am Lieutenant Walter Trumbull, of the United States Navy!"

"I knew it! I knew it! I mean that you were a naval officer," murmured Ida, with the happiest animation of voice and manner.

" And how did you know it?"

"Well, there is a question I cannot answer. Perhaps it is because I have not seen many young gentlemen except naval officers, and have thus become an adept in judging their characteristics. All my days have been passed upon the lonely spot where you find me. But excuse this wandering from my proper response to your

introduction of yourself to me. I am known-to the few who know me-as Ida Runnel!"

As the sonorous name glided from those sweet lips, Lieutenant Trumbull started to his feet as if propelled by some powerful battery.

"Excuse me," he murmured, with a look approaching consternation in the troubled depths of his eyes. "What name did you say?"

"Runnel-Ida Runnel!"

The young stranger recoiled as if an apparition had appeared before him.

"Is it possible!" he exclaimed, with a strange quavering of voice. "The name is by no means a common one. I have known only one other person who bears it-"

"It is the same with me, sir!"

"And that other person of the name is-is-how shall I say it ?—the notorious slave-trader—"

"Yes, and that notorious slave-trader is the only other Runnel that I know," said Ida, with her strange but charming frankness, "and that notorious slavetrader is the owner of this house, the lord and master of this estate, my reputed father-"

"Your father?" gasped Lieut. Trumbull, as he recoiled to the door, where he stood staring at the girl, while a pallor like that of a corpse overspread his face.

"His daughter? His daughter? Good Heavens!"

He appeared about to fall senseless to the floor.

Quiet as a spirit Ida glided a few steps nearer him, with stately mein, while she cried:

"Am I, then, so very hideous and horrible?"



CHAPTER XXIII.

A CROWNING JOY.

A period of five years had passed in the histories of our young adventurers, Arty and Elgie, since we last looked upon them.

They were still where we left them—the slaves of a petty negro despot.

They were greatly changed, however—changed as only a young couple can be between the ages of twelve and seventeen—changed, in a word, from mere children to a young lady and gentleman.

Their lot, to be sure, had not been favorable to their development, either mental or physical, and under some circumstances could have hardly failed to exercise a most depressing effect upon them.

But Arty and Elgie never for a moment ceased to be hopeful—never for a moment accepted their misfortunes as anything worse than a temporary affliction—and never ceased to look forward with bright anticipations to the hour of their restoration to freedom.

And their trials having been met in this spirit, they had in no wise been crushed by them. The one great compensation that each had, in the presence of the other, deprived the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" of their deadliest effects. In a word, they had not merely lived, but had splendidly developed during

these five years of sorrow—Arty into as noble a young man as the sun ever shone upon, and Elgie into a veritable incarnation of feminine loveliness.

The island of King Jeeba was still their wide prison, and the house of that ignoble chieftain the scene of their toils and humiliations. Few captives in like circumstances would probably have fared as well as they did. They had early discovered—in the severe school of training in which their lot had been cast—that no one is ever excused from making the most of his resources and surroundings, and had accepted their inevitable servitude with a grace and patience that robbed it of half its horrors.

Thus, Arty had made himself so useful to King Jeeba that that monarch regarded him in much the same light as he did the sun—as a necessary luminary for the transactions of all the affairs of his somewhat restricted kingdom. And Elgie had made herself equally agreeable and necessary to the leading queen of the household, so that upon all occasions, whether of business or pleasure, the young couple were sure to be found in attendance upon their royal masters.

Three times during these five years had the captives sought to escape, and once they had even penetrated to the main land, after a wandering and perilous absence of a week's duration, but they had eventually fallen into the hands of a petty tyrant who stood in awe of Jeeba, and had been in due course delivered up to that monarch.

To do Jeeba justice, we must add that he was so glad to have the young couple back that he did not punish them, unless terrific threats for the future can be regarded as a punishment.

Upon one of the other occasions of flight, the young couple had drifted directly upon a mud shoal several

miles in extent, at ebb tide, and been discovered before they could get afloat again.

As to their third attempt at escape, they had nearly reached an English trade-schooner which happened to be becalmed off the dangerous and unfrequented coast, and could have even escaped if they had been properly seconded by those aboard the schooner, but it appeared afterwards that the skipper of the craft could not believe in the reality of the white fugitives, and acted upon his suspicions of some treachery until it was too late to make himself useful in the premises, the fugitives having been overtaken and secured by one of Jeeba's royal canoes.

If all these attempts had failed, however, they had none the less served to keep alive in the souls of the young couple the possibility of their eventual restoration to freedom.

"I shall be stronger and wiser the next time," Arty had declared, after a long discussion of the third failure. "And events may happen in the midst of the royal household during the next few months that will open the way to our liberation. For instance, if Jeeba should die in one of his frequent carousals, his young son would succeed him, and Noony, I am sure, would give us our freedom on the instant."

As if to show how easy it is to be mistaken in one's calculations, Jeeba died not long after this conversation, and his son Noony duly succeeded him; but from that hour the situation of the young couple became more intolerable than before, and the difficulties in the way of their escape greater than ever.

The truth was, with the advent of Noony a new order of ideas and purposes had entered into the royal council. Noony was in love with Elgie, and one of his sable sisters was equally smitten with Arty.

What more perplexing combination for our young hero and heroine could possibly be imagined?

The mother of the black prince and princess, who, as the first and favorite wife of Jeeba, had been honored and powerful, was quite an intriguer and schemer in her way, and she had early conceived the idea of attaching Arty and Elgie permanently to her fortunes. It was fondly believed by her that a cross-alliance of the kind suggested would contribute not a little to the supremacy of her brood upon the whole coast and the surrounding islands, and to this end she had toiled and plotted with an ability that did her the greatest credit.

But naturally there was one or two great stumblingblocks in the way, of which she did not have any clear conception.

In the first place, she did not understand how utterly impossible it was that Elgie should ever become the wife of Noony, or that Arty should become the husband of the princess. The royal mother was not merely willing to see her children married to whites, but was anxiously coveting the high honor, and she was so conceited as to believe that our young hero and heroine would be equally solicitous of the high alliance she was meditating for them.

In the second place, the royal mother was not aware of a still greater stumbling-block in her way—the fact that Arty and Elgie had solemnly promised never to marry until their origin and relationship were fully discovered. Under these conflicting views it was not strange that an element of serious discord had been for some time rankling in the royal household of Noony, at the date to which this chronicle has advanced. Noony had even learned—for jealousy is a quick teacher—to regard Arty as a rival, and his sister had conceived a similar sentiment in regard to Elgie. Thus

both of our young friends had become not merely objects of affection, but also of jealous discontent and suspicion.

And as it is in the very nature of all situations of this kind to tend toward a crisis, it was simply inevitable that a critical moment had at length arrived in the history of the captives. In a word, Noony had definitely proposed to Elgie and been as definitely rejected, while a like state of affairs had arisen between the sable princess and Arty.

"We are in for it at last," said Arty to Elgie, when they had discussed the situation. "Now for chains and tortures—perhaps death itself—or now for freedom!"

Elgie sighed profoundly.

"I fear the worst," she said. "You have no idea of Noony's sullen anger. We shall be watched more closely than ever—or shut up closely, and perhaps in separate prisons. Whichever way we turn there will not be merely one or two pairs of eyes constantly upon us, as heretofore, but dozens."

"I comprehend only too well the storm that is preparing," said Arty. "An instant choice is before us—escape or death."

"Escape seems utterly impossible," said Elgie, "more out of our power than ever."

"Still there are one or two new points in our favor," said Arty, sinking his voice to a whisper. "To begin with, there is a sail upon the horizon."

"A sail?" gasped Elgie, clasping her hands. "It has been two years now since we saw one."

"It is certainly there—nearly due west—that is to say, nearly in the direction the wind is blowing and the current is now running. I have secured and hidden an old sabre and a loaded revolver—the latter for you. And finally, I have at command, sunken in a muddy

inlet, the light board skiff I have so long secretly been preparing. In a word, I am ready for another and final attempt to regain our freedom."

"Too late!" murmured Elgie. "Here comes our jailer."

A tall and formidable negro appeared, followed by several minions. His face was unusually stern and lowering. His arms were loaded with massive chains and fetters in readiness for use. His orders were to take the couple into the closest custody and confine them in separate prisons. Their days of even nominal freedom were over.

Once in the low and dingy stone apartment where the preceding conversation had taken place, the new comer made known his orders. He arrived a little later than intended, having been detained to forge a rivet or two, and the shadows of the evening were now beginning to settle around him.

One swift glance cast he around him, listening intently, and then shook himself as a lion shakes his mane at the beginning of battle.

"You come just in time," he said to the executor of Noony's proposed cruelties, stepping between the new comers and the door, which he closed by a prompt movement. "And you have supplied me, I see," he added, with a glance at the chains and fetters, "just the sort of jewelry with which I am anxious to supply you."

Out flashed a revolver from his pocket, and with its ominous click—so well understood by all present—the form of Arty seemed to expand to the proportions of a giant.

"Not the least word or cry," he enjoined, continuing to speak to the blacks in their own language, "or you die on the instant. There's more than a ball for every one of you!" Even brave men could be pardoned for cowering as those negroes cowered at that moment.

In less than three minutes they were all bound, gagged, and ironed, lying like dead men upon the earthen floor.

"And now we'll away, Elgie."

In another moment they were out of doors, with the door locked between them and their prisoners, and flying towards the spot where the boat mentioned by Arty was concealed—a not far distant beach.

Fortunately, their movements were not promptly witnessed. It was not till they had reached the edge of the water that they were discovered, and then the alarm was promptly suppressed and limited, Elgie mounting guard with the revolver over their discoverers, while Arty hastened to bring up his boat from the bed of an inlet, drag it ashore and empty it. A pair of oars were lashed in it. In a word, all was ready for instant departure, and not an instant was lost in taking possession of the craft and in pushing off.

And not till then was it that the alarm became general behind them.

"Let them how!" murmured Arty, and he plied his oars with desperate vigor. "We are safe from their pursuit! All is now well if we can reach the vessel!"

The sail he had seen had in the meantime stood in nearer to the coast. Scarcely half an hour had passed when the young couple perceived a stanch brig, which had just tacked, dashing toward them. Three minutes later Arty hailed and was answered.

"We are saved!" he murmured, as the brig hove-to to wait for him. "And how much that brig looks like the old *Bunting!*"

The boat was soon alongside, when the voice of the

commander, who was on the lookout forward for the fugitives, gave them a great thrill of wondering delight.

"It is Captain Strong!" was all Arty could say.

It was even so. It was Captain Strong in person, who had the pleasure of welcoming them aboard the brig a moment later!

Imagine the wild and joyous greetings.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A TICKLISH POSITION.

Captain Strong had changed but little—very little, indeed—during the five years Arty and Elgie had passed in slavery. His hair may have been somewhat grayer, and the lines of his countenance more clearly marked, but he was the same hearty and genial friend they had formerly found him.

It was casy, therefore, for the young couple to recognize him. They even knew him by his voice before the rays from his lantern had displayed his features.

But it is doubtful if the good captain would have known either Arty or Elgie, if he had passed in broad daylight within a yard of them. Arty was no longer the slender stripling he had known, nor was Elgie the thin, pale girl of his first acquaintance. Both had come up nobly toward man's and woman's estate, despite all the drawbacks of their captivity.

"Why, don't you know us, Captain Strong?" was Arty's half-reproachful inquiry, as he drew himself to his fullest height in front of the old navigator as soon as he had reached the deck of the brig.

The voice and the smile was enough for Captain Strong's memory.

"Why, if it isn't Arty Seaborn!" he shouted, in a voice of amazement, that rang from one end of the brig to the other.

"Yes, captain, and so happy to see you again. And here's Elgie—"

The start the captain gave at sight of the queenly beauty Elgie had now become, interrupted the current of our hero's observations.

"What! this our little Elgie?" roared Capt. Strong, in an ecstasy of delight, as he looked from one to the other.

"As you must know, Captain Strong, if you take a good look at me," said Elgie, as she surrendered her delicate hands to the gigantic paws that were just then extended to seize them. "Oh, I am so, so glad to see you again!"

"Well, if this isn't the strangest thing in the world to see you both again, so bright-looking and hearty, after all our unfortunate adventures!" exclaimed the jovial commander.

"You forget, Captain, there is one stranger thing in the world than our preservation, and that is your own, for the reason that we were safe in a ship when you last saw us, whereas you, the last time we knew anything about you, were adrift in an open boat—for we knew very well that you and the others were turned adrift, although Medlar pretended to us that you had made your escape."

"Escape!" cried the captain. "Why, the infernal villain sent us adrift handcuffed and ironed, expecting us to go to the bottom in less than five minutes, but a change of wind drove us straight to the island of St. Vincent, where we were picked up and cared for at an early hour of the following morning. It would be a long story to tell you what happened next, but you may

be sure that I found friends, and that I made it as hot as possible for the mutineers, for I supposed you two to be in their hands, you know, and left not a stone unturned in the effort to effect your recovery. The rascals escaped me, however, and went as far as the Bight of Benin, where they got rid of my whole cargo at a round figure, and then pushed out together-Medlar and De Soto-for the Sestos river, where they took in large cargoes of slaves and sailed for Brazil. They were seen by the cruisers, however, and duly overhauled, when they showed such good honest fight that nearly every mother's son of them was killed. I don't know that even one of the doubly-dyed villains survived the battle, but I have always had my idea that Medlar himself made good his escape, and is still prowling around the west coast and making mischief."

"But the Bunting escaped, I see," said Arty, looking around him.

"No, she shared the ill-fortune of the pirates," said Capt. Strong, "a shot having struck her near the waterline, and she went down before the least thing could be done by the cruisers to save her. The brig you are now aboard of is called the *Bunting*, to be sure, and is as much like the other as two peas in a pod; but she has been built since you saw me. You see, therefore, that the most of the gang failed to gain anything by their wickedness. But what am I thinking about?" he added abruptly, "to keep you standing here on deck all night when there is a good cabin at your service. Walk in!"

The reunited friends were soon in possession of the cabin, where Arty and Elgie narrated their adventures, while the steward hastened to prepare for them the best supper the resources of the brig afforded.

"The great loss about the old Bunting," observed the

commander, as he sat at table and looked after the comfort of his guests, "was the loss of my life-long collection of curiosities from every quarter of the globe."

"That was indeed a great loss," said Elgie, "and one I fear you will never be able to make good. How well I remember the pleasure Arty and I had in looking them over."

"And how well I remember the curiosities themselves—especially that life preserving suit in which I cut such a figure the night of the mutiny," exclaimed Arty. "Elgie and I have talked of these things often, Capt. Strong, and of you almost daily, hardly hoping that you had escaped, and yet venturing to trust at times that Heaven had been with you."

"As to that, my young friend, the mercies of Heaven are always with us, however dark our lot may seem to us," said the old navigator, reverently. "And I must say, as I look back upon all the years I have traversed that I have had a fair share of the world's joys and successes. You can hardly say the same thing now, but the end is not yet."

The first few days that followed this strange turn of the wheel of fortune were full of busy gladness to the young couple, as will readily be imagined. And during these days the *Bunting* continued to spread her white wings to the breeze, cruising along the coast to the southward.

"I am going a little further south this time than ever before," said Capt. Strong, as he and the young couple were making themselves comfortable under an awning upon the deck. "I may even go as far as the Cameroons. There is an old negro king called King Bell in that quarter, who is said to have a ravenous tooth for such commodities as the *Bunting* carries, and to have plenty of gold-dust with which to pay for them. Some of our

traders go as far south as Benguela, but those longer voyages are apt to have some drawbacks."

"What does your cargo consist of this time, Captain Strong?" asked Elgie.

"Oh, of the usual stock in trade," replied the commander—" of provisions, such as flour, beef, ship-bread, pork and hams, of which the European and American colonists all along the coast are great consumers. The natives, too, are all becoming attached to the white man's dainties, and especially to his New England rum and tobacco. Other articles I have are furniture, boots and shoes, wooden clocks, and almost every article of American manufacture in use among civilized men, including powder, guns, large brass pans and cotton cloth."

"The loss of the old Bunting and her cargo must have been a great blow to your hard-earned fortune?" observed Arty.

"Well, it was; but I do not complain," returned the commander, with a sigh, as he looked fixedly from one of his young friends to the other. "But I have set all to rights in the several voyages I have made since those misfortunes, and I may even say that I am better off to-day than ever before, especially when I look into your bright faces, and thank God that He has again brought us together."

The morning subsequent to this conversation, the Bunting came to anchor off a civilized settlement.

"Now for some trading," he said to Arty. "If you want to be of some service to me you can."

Arty was delighted at the chance.

"The first measure is to take ashore a list of all the things I have for sale," resumed Captain Strong, "with the prices of each article, and the kind of pay required. Some traders take only cash, but I have been in the

habit of taking the productions of the country at a stipulated price; for instance: camwood at sixty dollars a ton, palm-oil at twenty-five to thirty-three cents a gallon, and ivory, peanuts, gold dust, and gum at a fair valuation. All we shall do to-day is to take ashore the list, it is so late, but by morning business will be lively."

"But what do you do with the list, sir?"

"Why, we put it up conspicuously in the store of the leading merchant of the place, and traders, purchasers, and idlers come to see what there is for sale. The store becomes for the time the public exchange of that settlement. In due time I will go on shore with samples, and those who wish to buy anything will flock around me. In fact, I take up my residence ashore for the few days of the sale, and leave the brig in charge of the mate, who sends me the goods as they are called for. All this applies, of course, to settlements where there is some pretence to civilization."

The busy interest of Arty in the proceedings during the stay of the brig at this spot can be imagined. The call was pecuniarily successful, quite a large portion of the cargo being disposed of at good prices.

"Our next call will be at a different sort of place," observed the captain to Arty, after the brig had resumed her course—"at a native town, and not at a civilized settlement, and here we do business upon a different basis. On anchoring at a town ruled by a native chief, it is necessary to "dash" the ruler—that is to say, send him a present varying in value from twenty dollars to several hundred, according to the size of his kingdom. This "dash" is merely a rude way of paying custom-house duties, and we remunerate ourselves, of course, by putting a higher price upon what we have to sell than we would otherwise."

"I should think there would be some danger in trusting yourself among these savages," observed our hero.

"And so there is, in some places, if you do not take proper precautions," returned the commander. "For instance, the schooner Mary Carver, of Salem, commanded by Capt. Farwell of Vassalboro, was anchored at Half Berebee, with a cargo worth twelve thousand dollars. The captain had too much confidence in the treacherous rascals, although he had been warned against them, and one day, when he was ashore alone, the natives knocked him down and bound him, delivering him to the women and children, who tortured him for three hours by sticking thorns into his flesh, after which the brutes dispatched him. The captain having been disposed of, a large party was sent to the schooner to surprise and murder the mate and crew, and in this project were perfectly successful, not a soul on board escaping. The assassins then ran the vessel ashore, where she was stripped of everything. A Portuguese schooner was taken, and her crew murdered at the same place the previous year. There are, in fact, several points along the coast which it is unsafe to visit, the natives having the boldness to talk of 'catching' a vessel just as in other places they talk of catching a buck or a rabbit."

A couple of days later, the *Bunting* came to anchor off a native town of the ivory coast, and for a few days did a thriving business, thence proceeding to another.

In due course of trade, the *Bunting* at length arrived at a little place near Cape Coast Castle, where Capt. Strong hoped to do a profitable business, he having brought to the natives of the place quite a quantity of articles for which especial demands had been made during the last previous voyage. The king was duly "dashed," Capt. Strong himself taking the present

ashore, and for a few minutes everything passed off as pleasantly as expected. Then the boat was sent to the brig for a new load of goods, Capt. Strong remaining ashore, and upon the return of this boat to the beach it was found that the captain had vanished. The natives said that he had gone further inland to one of the houses of the king, but as the boat and its contents were instantly seized, and the crew secured and carried away, it became apparent at once to those who were watching events from the brig that foul play was in progress.

A second boat, which went on a cautious trip of inquiry shoreward, in charge of the mate, in the edge of the evening, did not return as expected, and Arty, who had been virtually left in charge of the vessel, although the second mate had nominal charge, was at once seized with the conviction that everything ashore was as wrong as it could be.

"This is evidently another Mary Carver affair," he said to Elgie, remembering what Captain Strong had told him about that ill-fated vessel. "Captain Strong is evidently in trouble, and perhaps the mate is, also. What can we do?"

The two boats being away, no further movement of that sort was to be thought of.

"The only thing we can do is to get our arms in readiness, and remain very watchful where we are," continued Arty, answering his own question. "If the captain is really in trouble there is no telling how soon we may have the black fiends buzzing in their canoes around us!"

These previsions were perfectly just, as the result proved. It was still early in the evening when a black spot appeared upon the surface of the water shorewards, proceeding slowly and silently toward the brig. And at sight of this ominous movement, Arty comprehended

at once that the natives were coming to attack the vessel! And with Captain Strong and the mate in heaven only knew what captivity or peril, the situation of affairs for the brig and those aboard of her was decidedly ticklish!

CHAPTER XXV.

MORE LIGHT ABOUT RUNNEL.

There are looks which can never be forgotten—supreme revelations of soul to soul—which can no more be blotted out of memory than the soul itself can be blotted out of existence.

Such a revelation was that which looked from the eyes of Ida Runnel, as she drew her lovely form proudly erect, and asked that awfully scornful question:

"Am I, then, so very hideous and horrible?"

A deadly knife could not have rankled more keenly in the flesh of Lieutenant Trumbull than did that question in his spirit.

How he had outraged her by the looks of horror bestowed upon her, and by even the more marked act of recoiling before her. What responsibility had she for sins of Captain Grebb Runnel, even upon the grounds that she was his daughter?

Abashed and self-reproachful, he advanced quickly several paces, dropping upon his knees. "Forgive me!" he cried, "forgive me, Miss Runnel! I have pained you involuntarily—not with any intentional malice. You do not share, of course, the infamy of your father—"

"I said reputed father, Lieutenant Trumbull, and I meant to imply that he is not my real father, although he has so declared himself during all these years."

The joy with which the young officer hailed the correction lighted up his whole face.

"I did not get that point clearly, in the excitement of the moment," he cried. "And when you know what reason I have to execrate the name of Runnel, you will not so much wonder at the foolish emotions into which I have allowed myself to be betrayed. Forgive me."

"Perhaps I was needlessly sensitive," murmured Ida, as she sank into the chair she had previously occupied. "But something within me cried out and rebelled against the gaze you were bestowing upon me. Something within me said that I was not the unclean and monstrous thing your attitude implied. What have I done, or what am I, that you should abhor me?"

"Pardon my folly," pleaded the lieutenant. "Let me tell you the secret of that emotion—why it is that the name of Runnel has power to move me in the way you have noticed."

Ida could only bow under the weakness of the reaction that had come upon her. She trembled like a leaf.

"A few days ago off Charleston," began the lieutenant, "Commodore Paulding, in his flag-ship, the *Decatur*, called me to his cabin and asked me if I would not undertake to bring the notorious slave-trader, Captain Grebb Runnel, to justice. I replied that I should be most happy to undertake the matter if he could indicate to me the necessary premises of action.

"The commodore then proceeded to say that Runnel's Baltimore-built clipper, the Ranger, was lying at the moment in Charleston harbor; that Runnel himself was ashore most of the time at a sailor's boarding-house

kept by a certain Black Ralph; and that it would be easy for me, after disguising myself properly, to encounter Runnel and apply for a berth on his clipper, he having just lost his first officer, a certain Mr. Gredin.

"The project looked perfectly feasible to me, the more especially as a letter of recommendation from the renowned Mirando, the great slave-hunter residing at the Cameroons, of a certain Whiteraven (who had soon after been killed in a skirmish on the west coast), had fallen into the commodore's hands, so that all I had to do was to present myself to Runnel under the name and in the character of the said Whiteraven.

"I accordingly entered upon the business at once, attracted alike by its dangers and importance, and within forty-eight hours after the conversation I have so briefly summarized, I was figuring as the first officer of the clipper in question—the long successful slave-ship of Captain Runnel!

"The hour for starting on a new voyage to the west coast of Africa for a cargo of slaves being at hand, Capt. Runnel unfolded to me his intentions and gave me his instructions. He said that he should pass eastward by the Bahamas—by the New Providence channel, in fact—it being his intention to call at one of the little islands of the group to see his daughter, and probably to take her to sea with him."

"Ah! that is why you were so ready to accept me as his daughter," murmured Ida. "And so you sailed in due course in the *Panger* as first officer?"

"I did, and for a couple of days everything went swimmingly enough, Capt. Runnel extending to me his entire confidence in all matters appertaining to the voyage. But at Nassau, where we called for a portion of the crew, there came aboard a sailor who had not only known the real Whiteraven well, but had been present at his death,

and was consequently in position to see in me at once a gigantic imposture and peril."

"What a misfortune for you!" cried Ida, with an involuntary shudder.

"It was, indeed, as you shall hear," continued the young officer. "No sooner had this sailor heard the name under which I was figuring, than he began making inquiries, and in less than five minutes thereafter he was having a private interview with Captain Runnel. My presence was promptly requested in the cabin."

"'It seems that the real Whiteraven is dead,' began Runnel. 'Here is a man who saw him killed. You are consequently an impostor, and I want to know who you are."

"Horrible!" was all the comment Ida could make, so fully did she enter into the situation thus portrayed by her companion.

"Until that moment," resumed the lieutenant, "I had had no complete conception of the violence of human passions. Words fail me to describe the frenzy into which Runnel was thrown by the discovery. Once fully cornered and stripped of my disguise, there were several men on the Ranger who knew me in my real character, and from that moment I could not even take refuge in silence. I was obliged to avow ail—my name, my motives, the whole secret of my disastrous mission—or rather they were patent upon the very face of the situation. The first measure of Runnel was to put me in irons between decks, and his second to study out some death for me adequate to my offence against him."

Ida was too excited to speak. The lieutenant calmed the excitement into which the very recollection of his experiences was hurrying him, and resumed:

"About twenty-four hours after my detection the Ranger came to anchor just before nightfall off one of

those desolate and uninhabited keys peculiar to these waters. I was taken ashore still heavily ironed. A hole was dug in the hard, white sand, and into this hole I was thrust. The sand was then replaced and packed hard around me, and I was thus left buried up to my neck in the unyielding substance, with only my head above it. Promising me that a cayman would soon eat my head off, and that he would come ashore in the morning to verify the fact, Runnel returned to the clipper, remaining quietly at anchor during the night!

"And, now, how was I saved? Two sailors swam off from the clipper during the night and released me, saying simply that they would not see a man of my stamp perish in that manner, and then swam back again, leaving me a little collection of rubbish in the form of a raft that was not adequate to bear one-half of my weight. Upon this raft I drifted and paddled away, making such good use of the night that I was many leagues away long before Runnel could have discovered my absence!"

Ida heaved a sigh of relief, but her panting breath still showed how deeply she was interested in the lieutenant's narration.

"In the course of the following afternoon," resumed Walter Trumbull, "I encountered a couple of turtle hunters, who, in a rude little sloop, undertook to convey me to Puerto Plata, their destination. All went on well with us until we were abreast of your island, when arose this wild tempest, overtaking us before we reached the sought-for shelter. The little craft was soon whelmed in the sea, and I hardly know how it was that I was alive upon reaching the shore."

"You have had a narrow escape from the storm, no doubt, as from—as from that terrible enemy," murmured Ida. "And how strange it is that you should have been brought to my presence—to mine!"

"It is indeed," returned Walter, with deep feeling.

"And now that you have heard my story, can you forgive me for having been so foolish—"

"Enough of apologies," interrupted Ida, as a faint smile came back to her cheeks. "Supposing me to be the daughter of the man who had done you such an injury, you could hardly have done otherwise than you did. But I assure you, lieutenant," she hastened to add, "that I am not his daughter; that I do not partake in his acts nor approve of them; that he can never, never be anything to me; and that at an early day I shall vanish from these scenes forever!"

"But whither will you go?"

"It matters little where—to any corner of the earth where he will not trouble me."

A few moments the face of the lieutenant was clouded, and then the cheery smile he had formerly exhibited came back to it.

"I see that you have a story to tell," he said, "and I am anxious to hear it, in return for mine."

"There is no need of many words to tell all that is known concerning me," declared Ida. "I was brought to this spot when a mere child, and three persons were left here to take charge of me—the colored couple you have seen, and a woman I have never known by any other name than 'Althie,' as she would never speak of her former history. Althie has been dead only a few days, and it is perhaps this event which has given a definite point to all my wild aspirations to take my leave of these surroundings forever."

The smile deepened upon Walter's face.

"It seems that, in coming here, I have been wisely guided," he affirmed, with a rare tenderness in his tones for so short an acquaintance. Whether it is that suffering has opened my eyes preternaturally, as in the case

of the martyrs of old, I cannot undertake to decide, but I see in you, Miss Runnel, the bright counterpart of my own spirit. Surely, you are not married?"

The query struck Ida as so singularly absurd, that the last trace of her late gloom was dispelled in a merry peal of laughter.

"Married!" she exclaimed. "Why, whom should I marry?"

"Perhaps some chance wayfarer like myself."

"Wayfarers of your stamp are not common hereabouts, Lieutenant Trumbull. Married? Why, I never had a lover!"

"Then it is time you did," returned Walter, laughingly. "I constitute myself one on the spot, with your gracious permission, of course."

How rapidly the sentiments thus kindled, multiplied and ripened. The couple did not separate until a late hour of the night, and then not to sleep, but to think of each other.

In a few days, the relation undertaken by Walter towards his young hostess, was an established fact. It was known throughout the whole island that the mysterious young lady had a lover, and not a few calls were made at the island manor with the hope of catching a glimpse of him. But Marcos had got the idea that his young master, as he already called him, was being hunted for his life by some unknown enemy, and very few, indeed, were the visitors admitted to the full honors of the house.

"How strange it is that he does not come," said Ida, one evening, when nearly a week had passed since Walter's arrival, as they sat in a secluded dell in front of the mansion, looking off upon the waters. "He told you he should call for his 'daughter?"

- "Yes, dear. How does he generally come? I mean in what sort of a craft?"
- "In an ordinary little turtling sloop—that is, in a craft of that appearance, but she is very fast and seaworthy."
 - "His visits are brief, I suppose?"
 - "Very-seldom exceeding a night or a day."
- "It is singular, as you say, what has become of him,' said Walter, thoughtfully. "He must have spent several days in looking for me, his hatred of me being so truly infernal. But this delay in his proposed coming signifies very little in our favor. I should not be surprised to see him walk in at any moment."

A few moments later, as the lovers sat quietly enjoying each other's society and the beautiful night, a small sloop suddenly glided into view in the foreground of the scene before them.

Ida leaped to her feet as if electrified.

"It is his sloop," she ejaculated, as a sudden pallor mantled her cheeks. "He is here at last, Walter! And how shall I meet him?"

CHAPTER XXVI.

RUNNEL AND IDA.

It did not take Ida and Walter long to prepare for the anticipated arrival of Runnel.

"Marcos and Matty are both posted and can be relied upon?" queried the lieutenant.

"Perfectly," replied Ida. "They would sooner die

than let him know that you have been here, or are here still. That was a point to guard especially, of course."

"Then the only thing to be considered is your course of action," said Walter. "Will you receive the man here, or in the house?"

"I will meet him about here, as I usually have done, and let him do as he pleases—either lead the way to the mansion, or seat himself here. In any and every case you will be near me?"

"Of course, dear. Do you apprehend any violence from this man?"

"I certainly do not fear any," returned the brave girl as she touched and partially exhibited a pistol she carried in her pocket. "But I dare say he is in a raging mood, and that his conduct will not have much of the fatherly kindness he has heretofore been at great pains to show me."

"Beware of him as you would of a mad dog, or a deadly reptile!" enjoined Walter, earnestly. "Since he is not your father, it is impossible to say what malice and infamy may underlie all his sentiments and purposes towards you. He may be—nay, probably is—at heart the worst enemy you have in the world!"

"Of course he is all that," returned Ida, "or else why has he kept me here during all these long years? But one purpose is as strong in my soul, Walter, as any purpose can possibly be in his. I do not intend he shall take his leave of me again until the mystery respecting me has received something of an explanation or clearing. What is the relation of this man to me? What is he driving at?"

"Perhaps you can extract some light from him upon all these points," suggested Walter. "In any case I would make the effort. I have only to add that I shall hover near you so long as he remains here." "And not merely that, Walter," breathed Ida, thoughtfully, "but do try to overhear any revelations he may make—any admissions—so that I can have in you a good witness against him."

"A capital thought!" commented Walter, as he pressed the fair girl to his heart a moment. "Depend upon me. And now be as brave and self-possessed as a Trojan. This night is destined, it seems to me, to be an important one in our histories."

"It shall certainly bring me some new views of this pretended father of mine," said the girl resolutely. "You see that the sloop has anchored, Walter? that a boat is coming ashore? It is time for you to vanish!"

"Kiss me quick, then!"

The kiss was heartily exchanged and multiplied into many, and then Walter concealed himself in a dense mass of shrubbery between the little dell and the house. The boat they had seen pushing off from the sloop soon reached the beach, and a solitary figure leaped nimbly ashore from it, and at once struck into the path leading to the dwelling.

This figure was indeed that of Runnel, as Ida saw at a glance.

As brave as she was—as much as she had schooled herself to meet him—her heart beat like a hammer upon an anvil.

She did not hesitate an instant, however, in the execution of her course of action. Runnel had scarcely began the ascent of the slope leading to the house, when she moved quietly from her concealment, directing her steps toward him. The distance between them lessened rapidly.

"Ah, there you are my charming daughter," cried Runnel, in a tone so unlike his usual voice, that no one would have believed it to emanate from the same source —it was now so easy, so soft, so light-hearted. "Coming to welcome me, my little bird, as usual! This is indeed a pleasure!"

A moment later Ida submitted gracefully to his "paternal" embrace, notwithstanding the strange fervor with which it was given.

"And so, you are well and happy as ever?" he rattled on lightly, as he surveyed her features intently in the moonlight. "Perhaps a little changed toward me, after my long delay about visiting you! You seem to me, dear, a little cold and strange. But it's no wonder," and he broke out into a laugh as apparently careless and free as the laugh of a school-boy. "It's a queer papa that you have, to be sure—always hurried to death in business, always absent, and always a stranger to the only being he cares for in all the world—his own darling daughter."

The hypocritical gushing was not so effective upon this occasion as it had been during the former visits of Runnel. He could not help noticing that Ida was singularly silent and non-responsive.

"You are not ill, I hope?" he suddenly asked.

"No, sir; I never was in better health in my life!"

"'Sir' to me, your own papa? It is not of papas that girls of your age are thinking, I suppose, but of lovers—ha, ha! Well, well, my dear child, as you grow older, you will naturally grow more formal with me, in the same ratio with which you become familiar with somebody else. Are you surprised to see me?"

"Not in the least. To the contrary, I have been for several days expecting you."

"Indeed! It's curious what a subtle sense there is about a woman. It does seem as if you could almost tell at times what is going on hundreds of miles

distant. But let us sit down here, my child, in our favorite dell, and have a good talk with each other."

He led the way to the dell in question, and took a seat in the rustic chair which had so lately been occupied by Walter. Ida followed him in thoughtful silence and seated herself near him.

"Let's see, you are now about seventeen," said Runnel, as he turned a searching glance upon the fair face and well-rounded form in front of him. About 'sweet seventeen,' eh?" and he showed his teeth in a voiceless laugh resembling the grin of a hyena.

"Yes, sir, about seventeen—if I was two years old at the time you brought me here, as I have been told."

"Yes, you are seventeen," said Runnel. "You were two years old at that time, and it has been just fifteen years since I brought you to this island. How short the time has been!"

"How long, you mean."

Runnel now laughed audibly.

"Well, that is merely our different ways of looking at the thing, I suppose," he declared, lightly. "Time would hardly pass as quickly to you in this solitude as to me in the busy world in which I have been figuring. But you have not been unhappy here, I hope?"

"Have I ever complained?"

"Certainly not—why should you? You have had all that a young girl needs—a good home, books, flowers, your embroidery, and servants to wait upon you. But I do not expect you to remain here forever."

"May I ask what you do expect concerning me?" asked Ida, quietly.

The question was so unexpected as to throw Runnel momentarily off his balance.

"Why, really," he stammered, "I haven't thought much about the matter. Have any of the young men

of the island paid you their addresses, formally or otherwise?"

- "Certainly not-for two good reasons."
- "And those two?"
- "The first is that I have purposely kept myself secluded, and the second is that my position here is too strange, mysterious, and even equivocal, to attract any suitor whose attentions would be worth accepting. Surely, you cannot be ignorant that I am a target for a great deal of annoying gossip?"

"Indeed! What do they say?"

- "That I have a father who is evidently ashamed of me, as he does not keep me with him, and that the less said about my mother the better, and that I myself am probably no better than I should be, and so on to the end of the chapter! What else could all these little minds say of the position in which you have been pleased to place me?"
 - "The insolent dolts!" muttered Runnel.
- "And that the gossips even extend their comments to you, is not to be wondered at," continued Ida. "They ask who you are, what is your business, why your visits here are so brief, where you reside when you pretend to be at home, what is your very pressing business, and ten thousand other questions!"

"Indeed!" muttered Runnel, after a thoughtful pause. "Why did you not tell me these things sooner?"

"Simply because they have chiefly transpired since your former visit. Some of these gossips," she added, "have even carried their malignancy so far as to doubt that you are really my father!"

"Indeed!" cried Runnel, with a start. "It is high time for a change of residence, then, and this is, in fact, one of the considerations of my present visit!" "I am to be taken to your residence, I suppose—to your home in Boston, New York, Philadelphia or Charleston, wherever it may be that you have deigned to reside all these years?"

"Yes—to be sure," returned Runnel, slowly. "Some sort of a change is to be made, and I am here to come

to some decision in the premises!"

"But would it not add fuel to the little flame of our gossips," asked Ida, scornfully, "if they were to overhear our conversation, and learn from it that I am not yet aware in what State or city of the Union you are residing? Are you not, in your confidential dealings with me, a model father?"

Runnel moved uneasily in his chair.

"True, I have kept my own counsels," he assented, "and why not? You have been a little girl all these years, and it is only now, as we may say, that you have become entitled to my confidence in regard to many of the affairs that mutually concern us?"

"But now you are going to make amends for all that reticence," resumed Ida, with a sneer that escaped his notice. "Now I shall know everything that concerns us?"

"Certainly—in due course."

"Then suppose you begin by telling me about my mother," proposed Ida, "who she was, her name, the date of her death, and all the other particulars I, as her child, am entitled to know."

"Why certainly—in due course," returned Runnel, uneasily. "I am about to come to an understanding with you upon all these matters, of course. But first a few questions on every-day matters. Marcos and Matty are hearty as ever, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

[&]quot;And are still faithful and devoted, taking good care

of the estate and doing all in their power to serve and please you?"

"Yes, sir."

"'Sir' again! You haven't called me father or papa to-night. You are certainly greatly changed from the nervous and clinging girl you were a year ago—the last time I was here, you know."

"I dare say I am changed, sir," was the cold answer.

"The year in question has been, in fact, a year of great changes."

Runnel felt the force of the remark, especially in regard to the change which had taken place in the girl's physical being. She was no longer the timid and shrinking child he had left her, but a woman.

"'Sweet seventeen' is a period of rapid transition," he soon observed, with a hollow laugh. "At my age, or at Althie's, the case is different. By the way, where is Althie?"

"Dead and buried, sir."

At this unexpected answer Runnel stared at Ida as if he deemed her bereft of her senses.

"Dead and buried?" he repeated. "What can you mean?"

"To answer your question simply and truly, sir. You asked after Althie, and I reply that she is dead and buried."

"Surely you cannot mean it, child!" he declared, in apprehensive amazement. "You wouldn't have waited until now to tell me of such a frightful misfortune!"

"I did wait, as you will eventually learn, sir. I waited to see if I could learn anything from you before you learned too much from me. If you still doubt that the woman in question is dead, I will call Marcos and Matty as witnesses of her death and burial."

"But this is surprising—astounding!" exclaimed

Runnel. "I should have thought you would have mentioned the matter immediately, instead of waiting until we had traveled around Robin Hood's barn."

Ida smiled icily.

"You misjudge me in that way because you do not fully comprehend my character, I am thinking," she declared, scornfully. "My soul was not bound up in the existence of 'Althie!' She has never been to me much more than a jailer."

"How did she die?" asked Runnel, abruptly.

"Of the bite of a serpent, in less than half an hour after she was bitten—as horrible a death as can be imagined."

"She suffered greatly, then?"

"A great deal, sir-especially mentally."

"How mentally?"

"Why, at the approach of death, she naturally repented of the long life of infamy and falsehood she had passed in your service."

"Infamy? Falsehood?" gasped Runnel. "What can you mean, my child?

"I mean that the 'my child' business is pretty well exposed, sir," declared Ida, with swift, steady, crushing utterance. "In her last moments, Althie confessed all the wickedness in which she had so long borne a part. She told me that you are *not* my father, and that you are neither an honest nor an honorable man, but the notorious slave-trader, Captain Grebb Runnel."



CHAPTER XXVII.

ANOTHER UNACCOUNTABLE ABSENCE.

It was to no ordinary peril that we left Arty Seaborn and his friends, as well as the good brig *Bunting*, exposed. The assailants were at least three hundred in number, and had not far from sixty canoes. It is not too much to say that they literally swarmed around the devoted band of defenders, their advance arriving long before Arty and his companions had taken adequate measures to repel them.

But Arty—the ruling spirit of the hour—did not once falter in the work to which his destiny had thus unexpectedly called him.

Not merely with rifle, pistol, and sabre did he and his hardy companions repel the noisy and murderous assailants, but with scalding water, hand grenades, and even the brig's signal rockets, the sharp wits of our hero having promptly told him that these latter means of defence were especially calculated to throw the negroes into confusion.

We hasten to add that it was only to the use of these more novel engines of war that the young hero and his friends were indebted for their eventual victory.

Perhaps the scalding water—of which the cook's coppers happened to be full at the moment—was the element that turned the tide of battle in favor of the

defence. There are few things, in fact, more dreaded than scalding water by a naked savage.

The deck of the brig being finally cleared of the assailants, Arty and his gallant friends naturally rested from the strife, while they listened and watched to see what would be the next move of the blacks. Assured at length that no further assault was to be immediately expected, the little band of heroes cleared the deck alike of the living and the dead, throwing them all overboard indiscriminately—an act which may be justly blamed, no doubt, but one that the great majority of mankind will be found as ready to comprehend as to excuse.

"And now to follow the rascals and see if I can find Capt. Strong and the rest," said Arty to Elgy, when all was in readiness aboard of the brig for another piece of work like that just finished.

"But how can you follow them?" asked Elgie, anxiously. "There is no boat."

"I must fall back upon a more primitive age of navigation than boating," said our hero, smilingly. "In a word, I shall have to swim."

"But there are sharks all along these coasts," observed the second mate, who was more remarkable for almost anything else than for his courage and brilliancy. He was, in fact, a good-natured booby, the only son of wealthy parents, of whom Capt. Strong had undertaken to make a navigator, merely on account of his father and mother, who were especial friends of the honest captain.

"True, there are sharks here," assented Arty, "but they are not so thick and voracious as we shall find them further down the coast. Another thing, they must have made a pretty good meal already of the forty or fifty Africans, dead or living, who have just been served up to them."

"Oh, Arty!" cried Elgie.

"Well, what do you want, dear?"

The girl hung her head. She didn't want anything. The exclamation had excaped her because the young man's remark seemed Neronic—that is to say, a sort of fiddling at the burning of Rome—but she did not know how to tell him so. In fact, when she reflected that Arty himself might have been lost to her in the struggle the savages had so wickedly provoked, she went out of the pity mood even more quickly than she had passed into it.

"It is settled, then," said Arty, as quietly as if the remark had referred to his taking his seat in a carriage for a ride. "I will secure the best life-preserver there is on the brig, and swim to the shore. It's a thousand pities I haven't at command the famous Indian-rubber suit of other days, but with a good ring canbuoy I dare say I shall not have the least trouble in effecting a landing.

"We are at least half a mile from the shore," said the second mate, who remained as adverse to Arty's proposed movement as ever.

"But why don't you take one of the native canoes, Arty?" suddenly suggested Elgie. "They are floating all around us."

"On every side except the shore side, true," assented Arty. "But the wind and tide are off shore, and it would be ten times as much work to paddle one of these dugouts ashore as to swim there. And that is why I will depend upon swimming."

The arrangements of the young man were soon perfected, and he quietly took his departure over the side to the great regret of at least two persons—Elgie, who

feared he would be drowned or eaten by the sharks, and the second mate, who mourned that in case of any further attack Arty would not be present to defend him.

Guided by numerous lights on the shore, Arty swam as nimbly as a fish in that direction. If he was not particularly afraid of having an arm or a limb gobbled, and his whole body consequently secured as a feast, by the scaly monsters presumed to be near him, he was aware how much a constant motion tends to keep them at a distance, and hence he did not make the smallest imaginable sojourn by the way—not so much as to send a single glance behind him.

After a swim that seemed even shorter than the favorable view he had taken of it beforehand, Arty neared the shore a little to the westward of the principal lights, and consequently at a point a little removed from the scenes in which the natives were so noisily figuring.

Securing his canbuoy to the first bush he encountered at the beach, Arty emerged from the water and crept as near to the crowd of half-frantic natives as he could, taking advantage of every bush or other object to prevent his presence from being discovered.

Here, however, Arty could learn nothing about Captain Strong and the missing sailors. It was easy enough to see that the blacks were bemoaning the loss of their friends, and more especially their failure to capture the brig, but beyond this their howlings and jumpings did not have the least signification. The prisoners, if Captain Strong and the missing men were indeed prisoners, were nowhere in view.

"I must go further inland!" thought Arty.

He hastened to do so. He did not pause, in fact, until he was a couple of miles inland, behind a consid-

erable range of hills, and in the midst of a considerable native town, to which he was guided by the constant stream of natives, with torches, who were journeying toward it from the coast, or returning to the coast from it.

And here it was that the bold and resolute intruder suddenly learned what had happened.

The little fetish temple in the midst of the town was in a blaze of light. Around it were great numbers of natives, all more or less excited. And just within the portal of the grim edifice lay Captain Strong and his men, all bound hand and foot, all partially stripped of their clothes, and all looking forward to the death with which they were threatened.

It was impossible, of course, for Arty to form at the moment any clear idea of the ceremonies in progress, the precise motives of the natives for their violence, or the benefit they expected to derive from the juggleries of the priests in reference to the captives. All our hero saw was that a profound darkness reigned immediately back of the fetish house, and that the ministers of the grovelling rites—a couple of stalwart blacks—had extinguished or removed the torches from their immediate vicinity, so as to shroud their entire proceedings in that dim light, or rather general darkness, which is so essential to the success of their impostures.

The mind of Arty was made up with the quickness of a flash of lightning.

Taking his way to the rear of the temple, he knocked the two busy magicians upon the head with the first club he encountered, and then further reduced the light shed abroad in that darkness, after covering himself with one of the vast mantles under which the enchanter had been operating. A moment later, while all was awe and expectation on the part of the natives, Arty released Capt. Strong and his men from their bonds, and led the way rapidly from the scene, taking the route of the coast in a joy too great for expression. And in less than an hour thereafter, having availed themselves of their own boats which they found on the beach, the whole party was safe aboard of the *Bunting*.

"This is the last call I shall make hereabouts," said Capt. Strong, after he and the rest had narrated how the natives had surprised and secured them. "I am going straight on now to the Cameroons. If it had not been for Arty's bravery and devotion, we should all have perished like rats in a trap, for the black rascals were thoroughly enraged at us for the losses they have suffered and the little they have secured to show for it.

It was several days after these adventures that the Bunting arrived in sight of the Cameroon mountains—a series of vast peaks rising, one above another, to a height of more than two miles. As the Cameroons rise directly from the water's edge, they look a great deal higher than they really are, as is the case with Teneriffe and other similar islands, and their apparent vastness very naturally filled our young travelers with curious amazement.

"Are you going to run for King Bell's town immediately, sir?" asked the mate of Captain Strong, as the old navigator stood pointing out to the young couple the new and marvelous sights before them.

"No, Conway," replied the captain. "I have got to call at a point off the coast near Pirate's Island, with a boat's load of things that were sent for by one of the wild chiefs of the neighborhood."

"Pirate's Island?" murmured Elgie. "Is that really its name, Captain Strong?"

"Certainly. It is so called from the pirates who infested it hundreds of years ago, when these coasts were first beginning to be famous."

"And are the inhabitants really pirates?"

"They are not merely pirates," returned Captain Strong, "but the Ishmaels of the whole region—their hands being against every man's, and every man's against them."

"And yet you dare to go among such people!"

"As you will soon see," said the old navigator, smilingly. "The truth is, I saved the life of the chief in question, by rescuing him from a boat's crew of his hereditary enemies, and he has been a very good friend and customer of mine ever since."

"And where is this Pirate's island?" asked Elgie, looking eagerly ahead.

"It is that little dot at the base of the mountains, and immediately in front of them."

"Why, it looks like a bird's nest!" cried Elgie.

"Well, it isn't much bigger than one—the strangest little rookery I have ever encountered. Perhaps we will all pay it a visit together, as the protection of my chief would ensure us all a good reception. But my first visit is to the mainland near the island, and not to the island itself—to a little stretch of beach in the bay of Amboises, and directly at the base of the Cameroons."

In the course of a couple of hours more the Bunting was anchored in the bay in question.

The day was now drawing to a close, but the commander did not have the least doubt of disposing of the business in hand, and returning to the brig before the night should fairly set in. A boat was accordingly lowered, the goods referred to were placed in it, and a couple of sailors were detailed to row it to the land.

"You may go with me, Arty, if you are willing," observed the commander, "as I may wish to leave you in charge of the boat, while the boys help me with the goods."

Arty was glad, as usual, at the chance thus afforded, and the boat was soon off for her destination, which she reached in due course, without accident or trouble. The chief and his retinue were upon the strand, with numerous followers and subjects, and the goods brought by the *Bunting* were carried, with great rejoicings, a short distance into the interior, to the town of the petty monarch; Captain Strong and his two sailors going with them, partly to receive their pay and partly to visit.

Left to himself in charge of the boat, Arty waited patiently enough until nightfall—until night had fully set in, in fact—but when several hours had glided away and nothing was heard or seen of Captain Strong, who was to have returned in half an hour, the young man naturally became anxious.

"It seems to me that he is mysteriously absent again!" he ejaculated. "What can have happened?"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A MIDNIGHT ADVENTURE.

The question Arty had asked himself, as he realized the suspicious nature of Captain Strong's prolonged absence, was neither a complaint nor a reproach, but a preliminary to business.

"I must go and see what has become of them," he decided, after a few minutes of deep reflection. "In

this darkness the boat can take care of itself, as no one would see it a dozen yards distant."

A question arose as to whether he should return to the brig and inform Elgie and his comrades of the absence of the party, but he was not long in perceiving that such a course would be a useless waste of time.

"Suppose the captain should come here the minute I am fairly gone with the boat," he mused, "a pretty kettle of fish he'd have to fry, wouldn't he? No, I'll leave the boat where the captain can find it whenever he may arrive here, and then I will take a good look in the direction he has gone. I dare say I shall soon meet him."

Securing the boat upon a beach that was at once retired and sandy, Arty took a good look at the lights of the brig, to assure himself that she had not left her anchorage, and then he struck out at a brisk pace for the rocky eminence over which Captain Strong and his two men, with their numerous black entertainers, had passed from his sight.

He had scarcely left the shore, however, when he was brought to a halt by sharp reports of musketry from the quarter to which he was proceeding. These reports were soon repeated, now in running fire, and anon in general volleys.

"The captain and his men had no guns," was the instant reflection of our hero. "A war of the natives must have broken out, and it may be that the captain is in some way involved in it. Or it may be that an attack has been made upon the captain."

This latter thought was sufficient to send Arty swiftly on his way again. He was not long in surmounting the eminence to which reference has been made, and in a few moments thereafter was striding swiftly along the valley thus entered.

A profound silence had now succeeded to the late reports of musketry, and Arty endeavored, as he passed on his way in the darkness, to force himself to believe that the firing he had heard resulted from some harmless recreation, or from some equally harmless scare. But a sudden and fiercer renewal of the reports assured our hero that an actual battle was in progress at no great distance from him.

This point being definitely established, the young man quickened his steps, determined to learn as soon as possible whether Captain Strong was involved in the warfare or not.

Guided now by the almost constant reports from the scene of conflict, exactly as he had been guided by the lights on the occasion of his former search for Captain Strong, he soon arrived in the immediate vicinity of the battle, so near, in fact, as to hear excited voices, and the groans of the wounded and dying.

"It is strange," he said to himself, "that these blacks cannot live in peace among themselves, but must be always making war upon one another. But it is equally strange," he mused further, "what Captain Strong has to do with the affair. Are these his friendly allies, and if so has he remained to take part in their quarrel?"

This last mental query seemed to throw more light upon the situation than all his previous reflections. What was more natural, if Captain Strong had found his ally in trouble, than to send him prompt assistance?

At the pace at which he had advanced from the coast—nearly the pace of a good horse—Arty was soon within a view worthy of description.

Upon the crest of a bare hill, which overlooked a narrow valley, in the center of which ran a considerable stream, was a large wooden stockade, built in a style that is general thoughout Africa, and yet displaying a great deal of good sense and skill. The tops of its timbers were sharpened, so as to make it a most risky business to attempt to scale them, and the natural strength of the place rendered it almost impregnable to such rude assaults as the natives are capable of delivering.

Behind this stockade were visible a large number of defenders, the most of them black, but having three notable white faces in their midst, which Arty at once recognized, by the flames of various burning materials, as the faces of Capt. Strong and his seamen.

"Thank Heaven! he is safe!" cried Arty, aloud. "It is as I supposed. He has espoused some quarrel of the chief he is visiting."

Moving in the direction of the stockade, Arty raised his voice to its loudest pitch in a succession of cries, and instantly had the pleasure of seeing that it resounded so high above all the din and confusion of the moment as to reach the ears for which it was intended.

"This way, Arty!" shouted Capt. Strong, in a voice that rang like a trumpet over the adjacent hill-sides. "Come to the big gate!"

Acting upon this hint, our hero was soon in the midst of the enclosure, where he was received with a wild outburst of rejoicing, not merely by Capt. Strong and his sailors, but by the sable chieftain and his subjects.

"You come just in time," was the greeting of Capt. Strong. "You heard the firing, I suppose, and became uneasy about us."

"Not until after I had set out to look you up," replied Arty. "But what is the trouble here?"

"A curious trouble enough," replied the old navigator. "A party of slave-hunters have suddenly made an attack upon my ebony friend and his people with a view to reducing them to slavery."

"Slave-hunters? White men, do you mean, sir?"

"Yes, my lad, a gang of our white cut-throats from the other side of the water," declared the captain. "Perhaps their cupidity is increased by some knowledge of the goods I have brought to African Jack, my ally. Be that as it may, a gang of villains came swooping down upon us just as I was about to settle with Jack, and have been giving us a world of trouble ever since. You see nothing of them for the moment, to be sure, as they are getting strength for a new start, but they are down there in the valley, in a sort of natural trench which prevents us from doing them justice. I am happy at believing, however, that I have laid one or two of them so thoroughly to rest in that trench that they will never require any other!"

Arty smiled at the zeal with which Captain Strong had espoused the cause of his sable friend, and the commander continued:

"If we only had the tools aboard of the Bunting, we would use that crowd of ruffians up in about fifteen minutes. I refer, of course, to those double-barrelled rifles, with fixed ammunition, with which you repelled the blacks so mortally on the occasion of our former battle."

"Then why don't you let me return to the brig for the rifles, Capt. Strong?" asked Arty, with simple directness. "And if all is quiet in that quarter, it will be easy for me to bring along three or four of the boys to assist in bringing this little job to a satisfactory conclusion."

"The very thing!" cried the old navigator.

"In this way," added Arty, "I shall quiet the anxiety Elgie and the rest must naturally have conceived respecting us."

"Yes, and you will assist in putting down these men-

stealing vagabonds and collecting my pay for the goods I brought here," returned Captain Strong, smilingly. "Be off at once, if you think you can find your way back to the shore in the darkness—a difficult job, I fear, as the path is a very poor one and seems to intersect a great many others."

"I can at least make the effort," said Arty, cheerfully.
"In any case, whether I get through quickly or not, you will know that I am safe, sir, and I should like to be able to give Elgie and the rest an equally good promise of your future."

"Well, you need not have the least hesitation on that score," declared the old navigator. "African Jack and I can hold out here, for all these fellows can do, till the morning of eternity."

Smiling again at the captain's heartiness in his novel situation, Arty wrung his hand earnestly, and was then let out into the road leading from the town of African Jack to the sea—the road, in fact, by which the young hero had come. Taking care to avoid the notice of the besiegers, he hurried away in the path he had so lately traversed, and in less than five minutes had crossed the crest of a ridge which shut him out from the view of the chieftain's stronghold, as indicated by the lights and fires within it.

"And now to make quick time to the shore," was Arty's thought, as he found himself alone in the great solitude. "Fortunately, there is light enough for me to see the path as well as the greater dangers by which it is beset in the shape of precipices."

On and on he sped for several minutes longer, and then he found himself suddenly halted by a question as to which of two paths before him was the one by which he had come.

An instant he inclined his ear, hoping to learn from

the roar of the sea in what direction it lay, but he was too far distant from it for its voices to reach him.

"It must be to the right," he said to himself, after a few moments of watchful survey of the scene around him. "The other path is too rocky and steep. It would carry me to the clouds, I should say, instead of to the sea. I must go to the right."

He acted upon this decision, and sped on for quite a distance along the front of a high ledge, but at last he became aware that everything was wearing a singularly new and strange look to him.

"Surely, I have not been here before," he said to himself, halting. "I must have taken the wrong path after all."

He went on again slowly, looking inquiringly around him, and suddenly his face brightened.

"Here's a path that will carry me to the right one," he ejaculated, as he came to another junction. "And now to make up for lost time."

Entering the new path, he sped along with renewed speed, but was soon pained and surprised to find that it returned to the one he had last quitted.

He was now at a high elevation, and apparently on the side of a mountain, for he could see far away in the distance—many miles away—lights which he believed to indicate the whereabouts of the *Bunting*. A cold sweat of excitement broke out upon his forehead.

"I must be miles out of my true course," he mused, "and in the midst of the frightful precipices of the Cameroon Mountains! What is to become of me? How shall I strike the true path? I wonder if there is a soul within call?"

He was debating these problems in his mind, standing motionless, when the figure of a woman suddenly appeared to his view, in the act of descending to his level from one of the heights above him, by means of a narrow and steep path, which was barely perceivable in the darkness.

At sight of this figure, Arty's heart suddenly quickened its beating to a gallop.

Who was she? Whence did she come? and whither was she going?

It was now after midnight, and it seemed a strange and startling thing for a white woman, as he had seen at a glance that she was, to be wandering at that hour in those wild mountains, which Captain Strong had expressly told him were not inhabited.

"Who are you?" he called, breaking the silence which only the footfalls of the woman had been disturbing.

A suppressed scream came from the woman, and then a groan of anguish.

"Who are you, I say?"

Instead of replying, the woman turned to fly by the path by which she had come.

"That is strange conduct," cried Arty, mentally. "I will follow her!"

While acting upon this resolve, he called repeatedly to the fugitive, saying that he intended no evil, but she did not pay the least heed to him, other than to fly more and more rapidly in the same ratio with which he quickened the pursuit.

"She won't make much by this business." said Arty to himself, with more or less vexation of spirit at being led such a chase. "I'll see what becomes of her, or I'll burst."

The chase was indeed a long and swift one. Higher and higher climbed the woman, now traversing the brow of vast precipices, from which a single misstep would have precipitated her a hundred yards below, and now plunging through shadows at the base of similar towering peaks.

"Well, am I not able to run down a woman?" said Arty to himself at length. "We'll see."

He threw all his soul into the struggle.

In this way he began to gain steadily upon the fugitive—to arrive nearer and nearer, despite all her desperate efforts to get clear of him. Her breathing now fell loud and pantingly upon his hearing, and he could see by the brighter moonlight of the vast heights he had now reached, that her steps were beginning to flag and waver.

"Hold on, I say!" he called again. "I mean you no harm!"

Not the least attention being paid to him, the chase continued as before, but with a result that was now seen to be inevitable, the pursuer gradually closing up the gap between him and the woman. He had even extended his hand to seize her, when a large stone cottage suddenly loomed up in the midst of a grove, crowning the crest of a plateau, and the fugitive contrived, by a final burst of speed, to reach the entrance of this edifice a few yards in advance of him. Strangely enough the door of this edifice was of iron, as was revealed by the clang of the key in its lock, and by the hollow echoes the door gave off to the least touch as it turned upon its hinges.

For one instant the woman hoped to take shelter within the dwelling before Arty could reach it, but the youngster's blood was up, and he did not hesitate to insert his foot in the doorway and force open the door, despite all the efforts of the woman to close it upon him.

There was a bright light in the apartment thus invaded, and as it fell full upon Arty's wild and flushed face, the woman recoiled from him with a cry of indescribable terror.

[&]quot;Oh! who are you?" she panted.

"My name is Arty Seaborn, madam," he replied, removing his hat. "I belong aboard the Bunting."

The announcement seemed to paralyze the strange lady. She stared at the intruder fixedly a moment, and then fell in a death-like swoon to the floor!

CHAPTER XXIX.

A CHANGE OF RELATIONS.

The consternation of Grebb Runnel at his unmasking from the lips of Ida, as related, was too great to admit of any immediate movement or reply. He sat as if turned to stone, except that a nervous trembling pervaded his frame, and his eyes glared like those of a madman.

- "The woman must have been crazy," was his first declaration.
- "No, sir, she was perfectly sane. I can vouch for the fact."
- "Then she must have designed to punish me for some real or fancied slight, by producing a coldness between you and me, Ida!"
- "Nothing of the kind, sir," affirmed Ida, in the same clear, decided tones she had before used. "The woman was dying, and naturally wanted to make amends for her wrong-doing!"
 - "You believe what she told you, then?"
 - "Most implicitly."
- "This accounts for the change I have noticed in you.
 You believe her—"
 - "I know that she spoke the truth. I am not your

daughter, Captain Runnel, and no one can be more conscious of that fact than yourself."

"Not my daughter, eh?" returned Runnel, with a rising wrath in his tones. "Permit me to declare to you, by everything sacred—"

"Anything you please, sir—anything you please, sir—that is not at variance with what I know," interrupted Ida. "But among the things I know is the fact that you are not my father. I should even perceive the fact in your dealings with me, now that I am in a position to review them. Say what you will, sir—only do not say anything to add to my present conviction that you are one of the most consummate of liars."

Grebb Runnel had never turned pale in his life with anger, but he did so now.

"One would say that you are utterly demented," he muttered.

"Let us not talk in the air, Captain Runnel," proposed Ida, sternly. "Let us get at the facts. A tew questions categorically. To begin with, do you begin to assert, in the face of that dying woman's declaration, made to Marcos and Matty, as well as to myself, that you are the author of my being?"

Runnel hesitated. No man lies except upon the presumption of being believed. In this case the villain knew that no amount of lying could gain him one iota of credence.

On the other hand, what objection was there to avowing a portion of the truth?

Was she not a gloriously beautiful girl? Had she not lived in such seclusion as to be heart-free? Was she not even available to him? Could he not drop the rôle of father and in due course assume that of lover?

"Well, what course will you take?" resumed Ida, with an icy smile of contempt. "Will you attempt

your impossible mountain of falsehood, or will you tumble into the easy valley of confession?"

"You have not told me fully what Althie said to you," he observed. "Let me have the fullest particulars!"

"So that you can model your confession or admissions upon them, eh?" sneered Ida. "All I need say at present, upon Althie's authority, is that you are not my father. What is your response to this plain statement?"

The villain hesitated a few moments longer, and then answered:

"The matter having gone so far-"

"Oh, of course!"

"I may as well admit that Althie's declaration is quite correct, and that I am not your father!"

"Then what are you? An uncle, perhaps? Or a good Samaritan who found me by the wayside? Suppose you go into details? It is really a curious problem to me how I came into your hands, and why you should have taken upon yourself the extraordinary rôle in which you have been figuring. Suppose you turn all the light possible upon this darkness?"

"My dear girl," returned Runnel, "you are inclined to be mocking and malicious in this inquiry, but there is no occasion for any sentiments of that nature. I am, indeed, Captain Grebb Runnel, slave-trader, villain, or what you will. Your father was a shiftless South Carolina planter, who was killed in a brawl, and who with his last breath implored me, as his college chum, to take charge of you. As to your mother, who was of the class known as 'poor whites,' the less said of her the better. You are the daughter of shame, and it was to rear you in ignorance of all their infamies that I brought you to this island!"

A quick, ringing blow from Ida's jewelled hand, as

she sprang to her feet, brought blood to the foul lips of Runnel.

"You are indeed an infamous liar," she cried, with a sibylline grandeur of passion. "If it were not for having the blood of a worthless reptile upon my hands,' and she drew her pistol, cocking it immediately under his nose, "you should answer now and here with your life for this dastardly insult to my mother! Know, vile wretch, that I will not believe the least word against her memory you can utter!"

To say that Runnel was astonished at this outburst of emotion, is a very mild way of putting the case.

"And this is the tigress I have cherished in this jungle," he muttered, as he wiped his bleeding lips. "By heaven! am I really awake, or dreaming?"

"Dreaming, sir—as only knavish fools can dream," cried Ida—"dreaming that some infamous plot, some vile wrong-doing, is destined to bring you some great good or satisfaction, when in reality every step in the business is carrying you swiftly down to present and eternal destruction. But know, sir, that in me you have an accuser who will never cease to investigate your secrets until all their foul corruption is as patent as the sun in the heavens."

Gradually the self-possession of Runnel came back to him. After all, his accuser was only a weak girl. She was still in a lonely island, where his authority over her was generally recognized. And there were his sloop and his minions within rifle-shot. Why should he take her "insolence" so meekly? How easy it would be for him to carry her off to sea, and give her a long seclusion in which to moderate her anger!

"Don't carry this thing too far, my girl," he enjoined, with some trace of his reflections looking from his eyes. "You are still as simple and harmless a being as there

is in the world, and must not be in too great haste to play with edged tools and the like."

For a few moments Ida was silent, and then she raised her head, remarking:

"I shall not ask you for any further information about myself, Captain Runnel, for two very good reasons. In the first place, I do not believe you would tell me a word of truth, and, in the second place, I could not believe, under any circumstances, a word from you on any subject, unless your word were supported by other testimony. In view of these facts, why should we prolong this interview? I will thank you to leave me!"

"Indeed, Miss!" sneered Runnel. "And how long since, if you please, did you become the owner of these premises? My impression is that I am in my own house and grounds, and that I shall remain here until it suits me to take my departure."

"Very well, sir—remain," said Ida, moving away from him. "It will answer all the requirements of the case if I take my departure from the premises!"

"That is a thing you will not do," said Runnel, mockingly, as he caught her by one of her wrists, detaining her. "Without going into any details as to my intentions concerning you, I may be allowed to declare, in the plainest of English, that I have not the least design of losing your company. Your presence will doubtless be doubly necessary to me from this time forward—because I have reason to hate and fear as I have to love you!"

"Let go my arm, sir!"

Instead of complying, Runnel glared at her features as revealed by the moonlight.

"By heaven!" he muttered, unguardedly, "you are the very image of your mother! The same spirit! the same beauty! Never, while the earth endures, shall you leave me!" "Let go my arm, Captain Runnel, and quickly," commanded Ida, sternly. "Quickly, I say!"

"And the poor little fool thinks she is going to deal with Grebb Runnel upon that sort of footing!" ejaculated the ruffian, as he tightened his grasp upon her. "Ah, how little you know me! Fume and struggle as you will, young woman, you are going straight to my sloop. And should you have the misfortune to attempt any resistance with that pistol you have exhibited, I will soon teach you what it is to have Grebb Runnel for an enemy."

The pistol was out in an instant, notwithstanding the threat, but Ida had not calculated either the strength or the vigor his furious passions had lent her enemy. The weapon had scarcely left her pocket when it was stricken from her hand, flying a couple of rods, and becoming lost in the bushes, and at the same time Runnel still further tightened his grasp upon her wrist, smiling grimly.

"You can come with me now," he said, with a smile as hideous and insolent as it was menacing. "I will take you to the sloop!"

He dragged her away rudely, but had not gone a dozen yards, when he received a blow that brought him senseless to the ground. And when he recovered his senses, a few moments thereafter, he found himself bound hand and foot, as in some giant vise, and the girl seated quietly in the chair she had previously occupied, and looking smilingly down upon him.

"Your plans didn't work, did they?" she sneered, when she saw that he was again conscious.

"No; curse you!" was his savage response. "Who was it that struck me? That infernal black? If so, I will kill him!"

"It wasn't that 'infernal black,' Captain Runnel. It was Walter!"

"Walter? Walter who?"

"Why, the Walter you so lately had a little scrimmage with on the Ranger," continued the girl. "Lieutenant Walter Trumbull of the United States Navy!"

At this announcement, Walter advanced from his concealment behind Ida, and placed himself immediately in front of the bound and prostrate man, in such a position that the moonlight fell full upon his fine form and features.

"Yes, it was I that hit you, Runnel," said Walter smilingly. "How do you like it?"

If looks could have blasted the young couple, they would both have died then and there. Never had either seen upon a human face such a look of impotent despairing and malignancy as mantled Runnel's features. And with his wild rage was blended an equally strong curiosity as to how Walter had come there and what were their relations to each other.

Upon the latter point, he was soon sufficiently enlightened by seeing Ida advance to Walter's side and pass her arm through his, and stand leaning affectionately upon him.

"The situation is really aggravating, Runnel, no doubt," resumed Walter, seeing that his prisoner had no language in which to express his feelings. "But it is not our intention to prolong it. Within twenty minutes we shall call your men ashore, and take them prisoners, placing them beside you, where you will all be found by the islanders in the morning. And within forty minutes at the latest, Miss Ida and I will be off for Charleston in your sloop, and Marcos and Matty will go with us."

It was utterly in vain that Runnel endeavored to mar

this programme by uttering loud calls for assistance. His cries had no other effect than to summon Marcos and Matty, who were soon informed of the posture of affairs and lent themselves actively to the wishes of their young master and mistress. Everything was soon ready for departure.

"And so, adieu," was the remark with which Walter took his leave of Runnel. "It is a long search that Ida and I are about to enter upon to find out her parentage and history, but we doubt not that we shall succeed in our ends sooner or later. I might carry you to Commodore Paulding, but to what earthly good? I have no other proofs of your criminality than you have told me, and your word is as worthless as a reptile's hiss. As to your crime against me, I could have no other witnesses than your vile confederates, out of a score of whose mouths not the smallest proposition could be established before any court or jury. We leave you here, therefore, with your men, to be released by the islanders in the morning, and have the pleasure of bidding you—we trust—a final farewell!"

A few minutes thereafter, with such of Ida's effects as she had chosen, and with Marcos and Matty, the lovers took possession of the sloop in which Runnel had come, and steered quietly away from the island, taking the most direct route for Charleston.

Not one of the four persons upon the sloop slept a wink during the night, all being too busy with the exciting events they had so lately traversed.

The following morning, at daybreak, a large frigateof-war suddenly loomed up out of the fog, a couple of miles away, and a wild shout of delight burst from Marcos' lips.

"It is the Decatur!" he cried. "I will resume my berth aboard of her, Ida, and you shall go with us as a

passenger until—until," and he smiled tenderly, "until other arrangements!"

In half an hour thereafter the good ship *Decatur*, with its addition of four persons, was stretching out into the Atlantic, headed for the west coast of Africa, while the little sloop Walter had abandoned was drifting lazily upon the waters.

"The Ranger has doubtless gone in that direction, or will as soon as Runnel returns to her," said the commodore, after he had received a brief report from Walter, "and it is upon the west coast that we must look for her."

Little did the commodore imagine what fateful events would grow out of the resolve thus taken?

CHAPTER XXX.

MOTHER AND SON.

Great was the consternation of Arty Seaborn at the result of his intrusion upon the strange woman of the Cameroon mountains.

"I am a fool and a rascal," he said to himself bitterly.
"What right had I to pursue her and burst in upon her in this manner? I have killed her! I have certainly killed her!"

Full of terrible self-reproaches and misgivings, he raised the lady's head from the floor, and hastily bathed her face with the contents of a water-pitcher that stood upon a table near him. And as he thus occupied himself, he could not help remarking the noble cast of the pale features and the beauty of their outlines.

For several minutes the young man hardly dared to draw a long breath. His first dreadful conviction that the lady was dead still lingered, she lay so still, so inanimate, so utterly bereft of all the signs of life and feeling. But anon there came a contraction of sharp pain upon the pallid countenance, and at sight of it Arty babbled his joy.

"She lives!" he gasped. "Perhaps I shall bring her around, after all."

He redoubled his exertions.

His experiences in this line had been few, and in his nervous fear he proceeded with an awkwardness that was comical, fairly deluging the face and neck and hair of the sufferer with water, but he none the less covered the necessary field. Chafing the hands and wrists of the lady smartly, he soon had the satisfaction of hearing a prolonged moan from her.

"Yes, she's coming to," was his thought, with a sigh of relief that almost answered to the lady's moan. "And if I ever get out of this trouble, you'll never catch me making such a fool of myself again!"

Probably all promises of this sort to one's self are absurdities, for the reason that no person can tell beforehand just how he will act in any given contingency, but the words may safely be accepted as proof that Arty was pretty thoroughly scared.

The moan which had escaped the sufferer's white lips was soon followed by others, at constantly lessening intervals, and at length she opened her eyes and made an effort to arise, while her eyes wandered around her in an eager search until they rested upon Arty.

"You are still here?" she then gasped, with a look of ineffable relief. "I feared you might have gone!"

She clung to him as a drowning mariner clings to his plank of salvation.

"I beg pardon for my intrusion, Madam," said Arty, as he assisted her to her feet, and placed her in a chair. "It was very wrong for me to pursue you and frighten you so. I was carried away by wonder and excitement. Forgive me for my folly!"

"There is nothing to forgive," breathed the lady, as her eyes rested in fond and admiring affection upon the bright face before her. "But I have everything in the world to be thankful for. Heaven has indeed been merciful. My prayers are at last strangely answered. Did you not say that you are Arty Seaborn?"

The youth bowed.

"And that you came to the west coast in the brig Bunting?"

Arty bowed again.

"And are you not the same lad who lived with Bludgett, the butcher, and who, more than five years ago, was sent adrift in a boat with your sister Elgie by a Mr. Spareman, with whom you were living?"

Once more Arty bowed, for the reason that language utterly failed him.

And as he thus bowed, he found his head taken between the lady's hands, a shower of wild kisses rained upon his lips and cheeks, and his whole form enclosed in the lady's arms, with a fervor he had never deemed any other being than Elgie capable of feeling.

"My son! my son!" was the glad cry with which those caresses were attended. "At last I have found you! My own and only boy! can you not comprehend that I am your mother?"

Arty could not comprehend anything about it, for reasons that are patent, but as he looked into the tender and melting eyes before him, as he marked the ecstacy with which they rested upon him, and as he felt those fervent caresses, he conceived that he had every induce-

ment to take a great deal upon credit, and he responded in kind to the mysterious lady's embraces and kisses.

"Yes, I am your own mother!" she said, as soon as she paused in her demonstrations, holding him at arm's length from her, and surveying him with infinite tenderness. "And you are my brave, noble boy—my first-born."

A single wild fear lingered in Arty's soul, and he hastened to express it in these words:

- "What if there should be some awful mistake?"
- "Oh, there is none!"
- "You know that I am your son?"
- "I know it beyond all doubt or possibility of error,' declared the lady, as her eyes welled over with tears of joy. "The proofs are all in my hands, as you may know by the names I have mentioned—Bludgett, Spareman, and Elgie. I have a perfect evidence of your identity in the fact that you are the living image of your father."

The joy of Arty at these assurances was too great for expression.

What rapture filled his soul!

At last she was before him—the mother of whom he had thought and dreamed so constantly during all his young years of desolation.

And how like she was to his ideal, grand and stately, yet full of sweetness and tenderness, with a face that bore the trace of her long unrest and suffering, and was yet lighted up with all the radiance of a constant hopefulness and an unfailing trust in the mercies of Heaven!

How wildly his heart beat as he gazed upon her, taking home to his soul the sweet conviction that she was indeed his mother.

"Oh, mother! mother!" burst impetuously from his

lips, as he gathered her wasted form in his strong arms, and caressed her with renewed floods of rapturous feeling. "What a joy this will be for Elgie! How happy we shall all be!"

"I hope so, dear, and indeed it is time," returned the lady, smiling through her tears. "And now to tell you who your mother is. You haven't the least information on this point, I suppose?"

" Not the least, mother."

Already the sacred name came from his lips with as much grace as gladness.

"Then I must tell you briefly who I am, my dear boy. A strange position, is it not, for a mother to be obliged to introduce herself to her own son? Your father was the late Colonel Abner Hillston, of South Carolina, and consequently your name is Hillston, as is mine!"

It was indeed our old friend. Mrs. Hillston, as the reader has perceived, of course, whom Arty had so providentially encountered.

- "Hillston?" murmured the boy. "I have never heard the name before in the world! And how strange it is that I should hear it first from your lips! My father is dead, then?"
 - "Yes, Felix-"
 - "What! my name is Felix, mother?"
 - "Yes, your real name is Felix-Felix Hillston!"
 - The boy repeated it with joyous pride.
- "That is better than Arty Seaborn," he commented, "if for no other reason than that it is my real name. I was not born at sea, was I, mother?"
- "No, my dear boy, but at your father's ancestral home near Charleston!"
- "Then I shall throw all that Seaborn business overboard at once," declared Felix, joyfully, "and become known by mv real title."

- "That is right, my son. And now to enlighten you briefly in regard to your history. Your father was a wealthy and distinguished gentleman, of whom you have every reason to be proud. The first few years of my life with him were one long happiness. I had no wish he did not gratify, no hope he did not fulfill. But he and I had a terrible enemy—a man who sought me in marriage after my betrothal to your father, and who was such a knave and fool as to vow vengeance for my rejection of his suit. Your father and I were prepared to suffer at this man's hands, knowing well his capacity for baseness, but we did not for one moment foresee the awful form his revenge would take. Suffice it to say that he stole you and your twin sister the day you were two years old, and from that day to the day of his death your poor father never learned a word as to what had become of you!"
 - "And what was the name of this enemy, mother?"
 - "Runnel-Grebb Runnel!"
- "Not the slave-dealer who has such an unenviable notoriety upon these shores?"
 - "The very same man!"
- "But what are you doing here, mother?" asked Felix with a swift glance at the prison-like walls around him.
 - "I am here as Runnel's prisoner!"
 - " His prisoner?"

The boy's eyes flashed fire as he repeated the word.

- "Yes, Felix—as his prisoner! He has kept me shut up here under lock and constant guard more than five years!"
 - "But how came you in his hands?"
- "About a year after your father's death, my son, this man Runnel presented himself at my house, near Charleston, and told me that my children were still living, and that he would produce them if I would marry

him. For your sake, and that of your sister, I consented to his terms, and he left me with the purpose of finding you and bringing you to me. But Spareman, in the meantime, had taken advantage of your running away to send you adrift—he acting upon previous instruction -and thus it happened that Runnel could not produce you. But a message came from Spareman, in due course, by telegraph, that you had been picked up by the Bunting of Salem, commanded by Captain Strong, and it was at once apparent that you would continue in the brig during the voyage upon which she had entered. It seemed wise and proper, therefore, for me to accept of Runnel's offer to bring me here in a search for my lost ones. I came accordingly—but only to an awful disappointment. The Bunting did not arrive, and a long period of waiting succeeded. Runnel built this house for me, and left me to await discoveries. In time it came out that the Bunting had been seized by mutineers, and that these ruffians had carried off my children. I would have made further search for you, but Runnel was just then pursuing me more earnestly than ever with his odious attentions, and in the end I had a violent scene with him. The result was that he shut me up closely, in the care of numerous minions, and here I have remained a prisoner from that day to this!"

"But you were miles from here, mother, when I met you to-night," murmured Felix.

"Yes, my son. I had at last made my escape. Some sort of an alarm had been raised to-day in the valleys below—some sort of a war between contending forces—but of precisely what nature I do not know. This fighting has thrown the household here into great agitation and confusion, and the greater portion of my jailers have run away, descending to the valleys in

quest of information. Only one grim old negress has remained faithful to her trust; and she has fallen dead with apoplexy, or some similar disease, and thus the way to my escape has been opened."

She led the way to an inner door of the apartment, and indicated by a gesture a bulky figure, reposing there in the embraces of death.

"The instant she was dead," resumed Mrs. Hillston, "I took the key from her belt of this outer door, and at once set out upon a precipitous flight down the mountain paths, determined to gain the shore, or even to throw myself upon the protection of some native king, rather than to endure this dreadful captivity longer. Everything went off well enough until I met you, my son, and you spoke to me, when I gave myself up for lost, supposing you to be in the service of Runnel, and ready to execute the will of that villain. My only hope seemed to be in regaining my prison without being recognized, and this was the motive of my flight."

"Oh, if I had known all!" sighed Felix, regretfully.

"This house belongs to Runnel, then?"

"Yes, my son. It is even his home when his ship is in the neighborhood. He resides here while waiting for his cargoes of ebony wood, as he calls the poor blacks."

"When do you expect him here again, mother?"

"From one day to another. He may arrive at any moment. I supposed he had arrived when I saw you in my pathway to-night."

"In this case, mother," said Felix, arising, "we had better be off. Are you strong enough to accompany me to the shore?"

"Strong enough? It seems to me that I could walk forever if my steps were accompanied by yours, and if they but led me from him."

"Then let's be off at once," proposed Felix, as he placed his pistol in readiness for prompt service. there anything you would take away with you?"

"Only a few trinkets-trifles of other days and of our

former home."

The preparations for departure were soon made.

"There are no other persons than ourselves upon the mountains, I suppose, mother?"

"Not a soul, in all probability!"

- "Then there can be no danger in lighting our way with the lantern I see on the shelf yonder!"
 - "Not the least!"
 - "Then may Heaven bear us company!"
 - "Amen, my son!"

A moment later the couple had emerged from the prison-house, and had taken the first of the paths leading to the sea. Arm in arm—the one in clinging tenderness, the other in strong protection—they pursued their devious and perilous way with souls too full of joy for utterance. They both felt and knew that they were treading the holiest of routes—the route which leads from sorrow to gladness!

"Elgie awaits us there," breathed Felix at length, in a quavering voice, as a light suddenly flashed upon his gaze from a point miles ahead of him. "What a joy is about to come upon her!"

Thus they went on together, the strangely reunited mother and son, after all the years of desolation a horrible villainy had caused them! And then and there they knew, as all know the glorious truth sooner or later, that the Great Master of Heaven takes daily and hourly action among the children of men!



CHAPTER XXXI.

EXPECTED AND AWAITED!

"Steady, you lubber!

The voice was that of Captain Grebb Runnel, raised to its sharpest tension. The time was early morning.

"Steady it is, sir!" came the answer from the man at the wheel.

"And mind that you pay no more such close calls to the sandbanks on each side of us," added Runnel, sternly. "There is room enough here, if you will use it. After the extraordinary run we have had from the West Indies, I have no intention of allowing you to spoil all by your carelessness. Steady!"

The command was again answered by the man at the wheel, and the Ranger continued to glide like some

giant bird up the still river.

A long silence followed on the part of Runnel, who was pacing to and fro upon the deck of the clipper, with strides resembling those of a wolf eager for his prey.

"It is no slight feat to have beaten that infernal frigate in such weather as we have had, Quimby," he

at length said to his executive.

"But are you sure we have beaten her, sir?"

"As sure as I am that I see you before me," declared [262]

Runnel, emphatically. "It was the *Decatur* that we saw struggling in the squall, hull down, just before dark yesterday—I would stake my life upon the fact—and she is still somewhere behind us. And here is where the little joke comes in, Quimby, for if I don't prepare a warm reception for somebody aboard of that craft, in case of their setting foot in my 'free and far dominions,' you may call me a liar."

"But how do you know that Lieut. Trumbull and the fair bride, that is to be, are aboard of the frigate?"

"Didn't I tell you? It is because they were seen to go aboard of her by some turtle-hunters, who knew my little sloop—the same so jauntily abandoned. I thought I mentioned the circumstances."

"No, you didn't, but the fact is it is just as good now as if I had been informed of it sooner," declared Quimby, who seemed a worthy mate for Runnel, being the beau ideal of a ruffian. "And so the young couple are aboard of the frigate, and she at our heels?"

"Yes, Quimby—so near that I hardly expected to slip into the river before she would see me. But the point is made, and it will go hard with me if I do not contrive to give that lieutenant and the girl a surprise of no common order. How far to the creek now, Quimby?"

"About half a mile, sir."

"Will the wind last us? I see it is failing."

"We shall have enough of it for our purpose," declared the executive, after holding up his hand a moment. "Within twenty minutes at the latest we shall be at the inlet."

The result proved the justice of these expectations. At the end of the period named, the clipper was steered into a deep and narrow inlet, at right angles with the

river, and along this inlet it proceeded about two hundred yards, then coming to anchor.

In this situation she was not merely invisible from the sea, but was so snugly enveloped and screened by the surrounding hills that any one would have had to cross the mouth of the inlet to see her.

"And now to cover the upper masts and yards with bushes," said Runnel. "The boys can attend to this matter, Quimby, while you and I make ready for our little expedition."

He led the way to the cabin.

Twenty minutes later, when the two men reappeared upon the clipper's deck, they seemed to have been transported to the midst of a forest, so completely had the large crew of the vessel robed her in bushes, and especially everything about the main-top.

"A good job," commented Runnel, as he stowed a brace of pistols in his belt, and slung upon his arm a basket of provisions. "Secure your best glass, Quimby—come!"

A boat was in the water astern, and the two men quietly descended into it.

"We will row ourselves," said Runnel to his second mate, as that personage looked inquiringly down upon him. "Fact is, we are only going a dozen rods or so by water—to the foot of the bluff seaward. The bulk of our expedition is to be performed on land. Keep everything snug in my absence, and don't let a mother's son loose until you have orders to that effect. The simple truth is, you may be assailed in force by the cursed enemies before night."

Nodding assent to the commands laid upon him, the second mate turned away to his duties, while Runnel and his executive seized the oars and rowed briskly away to the spot he had mentioned.

"We will leave the boat here," said the arch-villain, leaping ashore. "She will be perfectly safe in this concealment, especially as the spot is visible from the cliffs!"

Securing the craft to a bush, Runnel led the way up the steep bank, still carrying his basket of provisions.

"The first point in view," he muttered, "is to reach the very top of this ridge, so as to be able to see a sail from any quarter the moment it appears upon the horizon."

"You are going to your old look-out, then?"

"Yes, Quimby—to our old look-out. I know of no more sightly spot upon the whole coast!"

For a long time the two men toiled upwards and onwards in silence. It was not until the Ranger, in her snug nest, had dwindled to a mere speck behind them, that the least halt was made.

"We'd better divide the climb into two," Runnel then muttered, as he threw himself upon the ground. "I am not particularly wasted, to be sure, but I mean to keep myself in as good heart as a tiger in his native jungles."

"You are flattering yourself," laughed Quimby, as he imitated the example of his superior.

"Or is it the tiger that is flattered?" returned Runnel, with a smile that laid bare his white teeth. "The truth is, Quimby, I feel that an auspicious hour is dawning, and that kind fate is about to play into my hands more pleasantly than ever!"

He cherished this conviction in silence a few minutes, while resting from his arduous toils, and then resumed his way up the steep declivities which still continued to rise before him.

But at length the last of the tall crests was surmounted and the couple reached a small plateau, from which they had an unobstructed view in every direction, and especially for many leagues away upon the blue waters.

"By heavens! there she is!" cried Runnel, the instant he turned his eyes seaward. "There she is, Quimby, there she is!"

"Your sight is good," smiled the executive, as he looked in the direction indicated and set about unpack-

ing his glass.

"Yours would be if sharpened with such thirst for vengeance as mine is," declared Runnel, in a voice husky with savage delight. "But take a look for yourself and report."

The executive leveled his glass a full minute on the westward horizon, and then muttered:

"She is indeed the frigate!"

"I should have known her," affirmed Runnel, "if she had looked no larger than the wing of a humming-bird. There's nothing like revenge to sharpen one's eyesight or hearing. And now to sit down here, like a spider in his web, and await events."

"It's a long wait, I am thinking," said Quimby, as he threw himself upon the ground. "The frigate won't be up with the shore within two hours or more."

"It matters little when she arrives," declared Runnel, jubilantly. "The essential is to watch her as a cat watches a mouse, and improve the first opening for business. You are aware that the commodore is a polite man?"

"Oh, very polite," returned Quimby, laughingly, "and especially to you. He has long paid you, it seems to me, the most particular attentions!"

"Yes, curse him, and he will have to continue them a long time before he catches me napping. But I did not refer to his long and close hunt for me. What I meant was that he always has somebody around him

whom he is anxious to entertain. In this case it will doubtless be the girl. The lieutenant is a favorite with his superior, of course, if for no other reason than 'the perils he has passed,' and it will be the most natural thing in the world for the commodore to give the couple an airing ashore. The Cameroons are perfectly healthy, you know, and there are some very curious spots to visit at their base, such as Pirate's Island, the Bay of Amboises, and the like!"

"Well, if such should be the case, Captain," said the executive, musingly, "there'll be such a crowd of them come ashore, that you and I will be a decided minority—too feeble to make the least swoop!"

"Don't you believe that," returned Runnel, grimly. "Where there is a pair of lovers in the case, especially after a long confinement on shipboard, there is sure to be a prompt solitude, if all creation were in the offing. Don't you see, Quimby? But of course you don't, for you were never in love!"

"And I never wish to be—saving your presence," growled Quimby. "But if I ever do fall in love with a woman, I'll take her by the throat, if needs be, until she has married me, and then she may go to the deuce, for after marriage the whole crazy charm of the business is broken, it seems to me, and nothing more remains for the two fond hearts but to get quit of each other and be happy."

Runnel laughed until he cried at this new view of courtship, but the hard and grim expression of feature with which he had set out upon the morning's expedition was not long in coming back to his face.

"She comes up rapidly," he muttered, as he again turned his eyes upon the approaching frigate. "At this rate she will be at anchor within a couple of hours."

The result proved how well the intelligent villain

had calculated the conditions in which the frigate was making the land, for it was precisely two hours after that remark was made that the cruiser reached her chosen berth and paused in her swift flight.

"And now look sharp with your glass, Quimby," enjoined Runnel. "Stay! let me have hold of it myself. If all the movement I have noticed aboard the ship during the last half hour does not signify something I shall be greatly mistaken!"

The deeply-absorbed villain had scarcely placed the glass to his eye, when he uttered a wild ejaculation of joy.

"It is as I foresaw," he muttered. "A boat is coming ashore!"

"That signifies very little," returned Quimby. "The boat is of very little account, or its trip ashore either. The only thing that can give any point to the business is—who is in it?"

Runnel uttered another wild cry—a cry resembling the roar of some wild animal about to dart on its prey.

"The girl and the lieutenant are both coming," he cried, dancing about like a madman. "And now to prepare for their reception!"

And it was with a face like that of a demon that Runnel thus awaited the arrival of his intended victims.

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CHAPTER XXXII.

RUNNEL'S UNMASKING.

Runnel was still striding to and fro upon his lofty post of observation when a herculean negro, of a sinister cast of countenance, suddenly presented himself in a state of great agitation.

"It's you, eh, Quabby?" was Runnel's greeting.

The black dropped upon his knees, showing the whites of his eyes to a vast extent in his terror.

"It's not my fault!" he said.

Runnel looked at him in astonishment, but with a quick uneasiness.

- "What is not your fault?"
- "Mimmy is dead!"
- "Dead? Mimmy? How did it happen?"
- "Dead same as Maum Blacky—all in a heap!"

Runnel comprehended that the female jailer he had left in charge of Mrs. Hillston had died suddenly. As indicated by the words of the black, Maum Blacky, the old sorceress, who had accompained Mrs. Hillston from Charleston, had died of heart-disease or apoplexy two years before.

"And so Mimmy is dead?" commented Runnel, without any particular feeling. "Well, let her die, since we can't help it. We must all come to it sooner or later!"

"But white woman gone!" continued the black, more excitedly than ever.

Runnel started violently.

"Mrs. Hillston gone?" he muttered.

"Yes, escaped."

The slave-dealer repeated the word with an oath too horrible to record.

"And how did she escape?" he demanded, as soon as he could partially calm himself.

"Mimmy drop down dead, and then the white woman take key and escape."

"But where were the rest of you?"

"We had gone down to the valley on account of the fighting."

"Fighting? What fighting?"

The black explained, giving a distorted account of the warfare in which Captain Strong had figured, as related.

The rage of Runnel was for a few moments so savage as to choke his utterance.

"And so Mrs. Hillston has escaped?" he finally muttered, as much to himself as to his executive. "When did she escape, Quabby?"

"Some time in the night-long after dark."

Runnel drew a sigh of relief.

"Then all is not so bad as it might be," he muttered.

"Mrs. Hillston has never had a chance to get acquainted with the country round her. She cannot have gone far in the darkness. Some precipice would soon bring her to a halt, and perhaps break her neck. I do not believe she has descended from the mountains, or that she will readily. Doubtless she is still wandering somewhere among them."

Turning to his black messenger, he gave him directions to scour the mountains in every direction at the head of all the blacks he could assemble, and then dismissed him.

"And now to pursue more important game," said

Runnel, turning to his executive. "The boat has left the frigate, I see, and is making for the land. Let's descend to the neighborhood where it is likely to touch shore, and be ready for business."

Acting upon this proposition, the two men were soon in concealment not far from the beach towards which the boat was directly headed.

"We shall have them," muttered Runnel with a wild chuckle, as he passed his hand over the numerous concealed weapons. "We shall have them."

"What is your programme?"

"To kill the lieutenant on the spot, of course, and take the girl prisoner."

"The work's simple enough," commented the executive, "but we shall have to be favored to execute it. That is to say, the young couple will have to be pounced upon when they are some distance from their companions."

"Oh, we shall get the chance!" affirmed Runnel huskily, as he smiled grimly. "Lovers are solitary animals, and this couple will soon be wandering by themselves."

"You must be sure that there is no mistake in their identity," suggested the executive.

"Sure!" repeated Runnel, lowering the glass from his eye. "I can recognize them from here. Curiously enough, the old commodore is not in the party—no one of any consequence as I can see. The trip ashore seems to be for the benefit of the young couple entirely—or rather for mine."

It was indeed our young friends, Ida Runnel and Lieut. Walter Trumbull, who now landed upon the beach, and began sauntering along its shore together, engaged in such sweet converse as to pay very little attention to anything around them.

"They will doubtless come this way," muttered the executive, after watching them a moment.

"Yes, they are coming!" and so to the move and

The couple were indeed crossing the long stretch of sandy beach, and directing their steps towards the inviting shadows in which their murderous enemy was awaiting them.

A few minutes later, seated upon a mossy bank, under a giant tree, in the midst of such foliage that they were entirely cut off from the view of the boat's crew and their other friends, the young couple were merrily reviewing the voyage thus accomplished.

"It has been very pleasant," said Walter.

"Very," returned Ida. Is amonom tond wat A

"Without a single drawback."

"With only sunshine and brightness."

The lieutenant moved nearer to his lovely companion, while his handsome countenance became illuminated with an unwonted radiance.

"Then why should we not accept this voyage as typical of a greater one offered us?" he murmured. "Let us embark upon the great voyage of life together. Will you not become my wife?"

"I would gladly, Walter," answered the girl, without a moment's hesitation, "were it not for this great mystery which rests upon me. Would it be right for me to assent to your generous proposal? Who am I? What is my parentage?"

"All those questions are not really vital," returned Walter, earnestly. "I love you for yourself alone. As to your fear that there may be something dark or shameful in your origin, dismiss it forever. I do not believe there is the least occasion for any fear of the kind. Whatever may be the nature of the cloud enveloping you, there is not the least hope of our

ever being able to clear up the mystery. Runnel alone knows your real history, and it is unlikely that you will ever see him again, and still more unlikely that he would ever reveal to you the secret."

At this instant there was a swift rush of footsteps behind the couple—a movement that startled them—but they had not time to protect themselves against it. A stout knife gleamed against the breast of Walter Trumbull, who sank in a mass to the ground, lying as silent as a stone. At the same instant Ida found a vise-like grasp encircling her throat, and was raised bodily from the ground by several stout hands and arms, and borne rapidly away into the depths of the forest.

A few brief moments she struggled violently, and then, as her horrified gaze fell upon the inflamed countenance of Runnel, she swooned away into utter unconsciousness.

When she recovered her senses, she was seated upon a mossy bank near a spring, in the depths of a thick tropical jungle, far away from the sea, and even far beyond the roar of its breakers.

Her head and face were dripping wet, having been freely bathed.

Runnel and his companions sat beside her—the former as repulsive of mien as a demon.

"So we meet again, Miss?" queried the miscreant, mockingly.

The girl did not reply. She was not merely realizing into whose hands she had fallen, but the absence of Walter and all that absence signified.

"To the contrary of the views you have lately expressed," continued Runnel, "I am ready to give you complete details in regard to your origin and history!"

The agonized girl rocked her trembling frame swiftly to and fro.

"It does not matter now what my origin was," she returned. "Oh, monster! monster! you have killed Walter! And to think that I have so long regarded you as my father!"

Runnel laughed aloud. Wor moithetts lie and abl

"Every one is liable to their little mistakes," he muttered. "But I have made none in regard to that infamous traitor who attempted to betray me to Uncle Sam's cruisers. The hour has come for plain speaking between us, girl! You shall not merely know who and what you are, but what is the fate before you!"

The girl was still silent, but made a gesture signifying that she did not care for anything he was able or willing to tell her.

"Your real name is Hillston," began the ruffian, and you are the daughter of that Mrs. Hillston whose supposed drowning, after wandering from her home in the delirium of a fever, produced such great excitement in Charleston five years ago. I remember that a Charleston paper of the time strayed into your hands, and that you were greatly interested in the business. Well, Miss, I stole you and your brother from your home near Charleston, when you and he were two years old. I stole you because I had sworn to have a dreadful revenge upon your accursed parents."

Ida made no reply to these declarations, but she followed them closely.

"And now mark what a trap I set for those parents of yours," continued Runnel, with an infernal laugh. "To mix and confuse things, to prevent your parents from ever untangling the web I was weaving, even if their infernal detectives should succeed in overhauling me, I stole at the same time another

little girl of precisely your own age, and this second little girl I shipped to the North from New Orleans with your brother, with a view to letting them grow up together under the mistaken impression that they were brother and sister."

Ida was all attention now. A plot so truly infernal could not have failed to startle her from even the wild lethargy of sorrow into which she had fallen.

"Your brother and the pretended sister thus supplied him," resumed Runnel, "were shipwrecked near Boston, and were reared in humble and obscure poverty upon the coast near that metropolis, under the names of Arty and Elgie Seaborn. Afterwards, at the end of a series of events I need not detail, they went adrift in a boat, and were picked up by a Salem trader, the brig Bunting, and carried to the west coast of Africa. What became of them I do not know. I only know that the Bunting fell into the hands of a gang of mutineers, and that the young couple dropped out of sight into some mysterious oblivion.

"So much for your brother and his pretended sister, Miss Ida. Now for yourself.

"It seemed to me another good feature in the case for me to rear you as my own daughter. I accordingly took you to that out-of-the-way island in the West Indies, engaging Althie and Marcos and Matty to take charge of you, and at the same time instructing Althie not to let you escape. My intention was simple. In due course I could throw off my paternal character and appear in that of a lover. Not having been able to marry your mother, I could thus secure the subtle revenge of marrying her daughter—so much her superior in youth and beauty. Ha, ha! was it not gloriously done? And to give a crowning joy to my vengeance, I have had your mother a close prisoner in my hands all

these years, awaiting the hour when I could make you my wife and take you into her presence and say to her: 'Woman, behold your daughter!' You see, Miss Ida, that I have lived and toiled for a truly gigantic revenge!"

The villain had reached this point of his vile confidences, when there was a sudden stir in the bushes immediately behind him.

"What's that?" he cried, leaping to his feet and grasping a concealed weapon.

A quick, sharp report of musketry was the answer.

pt suggesting themselves to her had really befallen

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE HOUR OF RECOMPENSE.

The terror which gradually entered the soul of Elgie Seaborn, as she paced to and fro upon the deck of the Bunting, awaiting the return of Arty and Captain Strong, was too great for expression.

What had become of them? Why did they not return?

It was in vain that the officers and men of the brig endeavored to comfort her. She had one answer for every consolation offered her.

"I know that something is wrong," she declared, "or Arty would not leave me in this awful suspense. This African Jack is like some of the other chiefs Captain Strong has been dealing with, no doubt. Both Arty and Captain Strong have been murdered!"

As often as she gave way to this dreadful conviction, her tears flowed freely, of course. Hour after hour she thus paced to and fro upon the deck of the brig, sending many a wistful glance shorewards, and often pausing in her walk to listen for some sounds of the longed-for return, such as the flashing of oars, but all in vain. The silence in which they had vanished remained unbroken.

We need not linger upon the agonies of the poor girl during that long and anxious night. Not once did she enter the cabin. Not once did she endeavor to compose herself to sleep. She felt that her very life was bound up in Arty, and that she would have nothing in the world to live for if any of the great calamities which kept suggesting themselves to her had really befallen him.

With the first gleams of day she was doing what she had done during the long hours of darkness—looking intently shoreward through a glass for some sign of the absent ones.

"Oh, where can they be?" was still her wild and despairing cry.

"There is one consolation for us," said the mate of the brig, Mr. Conway, who had long been standing by her side, pitying her and sharing her distress. "One of the war-ships of the United States is coming up rapidly from the westward, and—"

"A war-ship!" breathed Elgie, with the first gleam of hope in her eyes that had been seen in them for hours.

"A first-class frigate," continued Conway, "and if I am not greatly mistaken, she is the *Decatur*, the flag-ship of Commodore Paulding—that is to say, one of the most active of the cruisers employed upon this station."

"It is certainly a ship-of-war," murmured the girl, after she had looked at the approaching sail attentively,

"and she is coming this way—almost directly toward us. Can we signal her, Mr. Conway?"

"I think she will anchor within a quarter of a mile of us," declared the mate. "This is one of the *Decatur's* favorite stopping-places. She is now, doubtless, from the other side, and will water hereabouts and get aboard fresh provisions, as is her custom."

"Then I know what I shall do, Mr. Conway," declared the girl, with grave emphasis. "I shall call upon the commodore as soon as his ship is anchored."

"What! You?"

"Yes, I—to tell him what has happened to Arty and Capt. Strong, and ask him to send some one of his men to find them."

It was in vain that Mr. Conway suggested sundry objections to this line of conduct. Our young heroine was determined in her purpose.

"After all, perhaps you are right," he admitted, after a further talk with her. "It can certainly do no harm for us to inform the commodore of this prolonged absence, and it may do a great deal of good."

"Then you will take me to the commodore's ship, Mr. Conway?"

"I certainly will—if the captain does not return before the frigate is at her old anchorage!"

We need not pause upon the long and anxious watch that followed this conversation. Dividing her time between the shore and the frigate, the anxious girl awaited developments, in a frame of mind we will not attempt to reveal. No sign of her missing friends was vouchsafed her, but the frigate came up to her berth with all the speed of a fine and favoring breeze.

"It is the Decatur!" exclaimed Conway, as soon as the ship-of-war showed her side to him. "And as I see that she is preparing to anchor, I will get out a boat at once, and board her within five minutes after her anchor touches the bottom!"

For the first time in an hour Elgie drew a long breath at this assurance.

"Oh, if you will!" she sighed.

"I certainly will, for the reason that I don't know what else to do," declared Conway. "I agree with you now that there is something wrong in this long absence of Arty and Captain Strong!"

The boat was soon lowered and manned. Giving a few cares to her toilet, so as to make herself look as well as possible to the eyes of the commodore, Elgie took her place in the frail craft, and it was rowed swiftly away toward the frigate, which was just coming to anchor.

It thus happened that Elgie arrived alongside the frigate within three minutes after Ida Runnel and her lover had left it—the one boat arriving on one side of the ship, and the second departing shorewards from the other.

"What do you want?" called a marine, looking down upon the new-comers.

"A rope, first of all," answered Conway.

A rope was flung to him. He seized it deftly, and the boat was soon fast to the frigate.

"And now I want to see the commodore just as soon as I can," announced Elgie, as she arose in the boat and glanced up the frowning side of the ship.

"Oh! you do?" queried the marine, smiling

The commodore himself heard that sweet voice below him, and his curiosity was at once aroused. Stepping to the gangway, he looked down inquiringly upon his visitors.

"If you please, sir," said Conway, removing his cap,

"here is a young lady in great distress, who wishes to see you."

The commodore took one good look at the sweet girlish face upturned to him, and then, with a quick start of surprise and interest, made a gesture to an officer standing near him. The steps were at once lowered, and in a few moments thereafter, with the aid of sundry helping hands, Elgie stood upon the deck of the frigate.

"And so, my little girl, you wish to see me, do you?" asked the commodore, as he advanced to meet her, regarding her with a strange intentness. "What in the

world can I do for you?"

"Oh, if you please, sir," began the girl, in a great agitation, "Arty and Captain Strong have been ashore all night, when they intended to be gone only for an hour-" She paused for want of breath.

"And who is Arty, my dear, and who is Captain Strong?" asked the commodore. "Or, rather, to begin at the beginning, who are you?"

"I am Elgie Seaborn, sir," announced the girl, with a

pretty assumption of dignity.

"Elgie Seaborn?" muttered the commodore. "An odd name, is it not, my dear?"

"Oh, I don't know my real name, sir," declared Elgie.

"Not know your real name?" cried the commodore, with a greater start than he had given at first sight of the girl. "Why, how is that?"

"I was cast ashore when I was a baby, sir, and nobody knows where I came from, nor what is my real name, nor who were my parents, nor-"

"Hold, child!" exclaimed the commodore, stepping briskly toward her. "What is that upon your neck?"

"A locket, sir!"

"A locket!" and the eyes of the commodore seemed to devour the trinket. "Where did you get it?"

"I don't know, sir! It was on my neck when I was shipwrecked ever so many years ago!"

"Good Heavens! Let me see it!"

The girl hastily detached the bauble from her neck, and the commodore as hastily seized it, regarding it with a most fixed and surprising interest.

"The same! the very same!" he cried, his whole frame shaking with a profound agitation. "How long have you had it?"

"Ever since I was a baby, sir! It was on my neck when I was shipwrecked—when I was only two years old!"

"It is the very same!" exclaimed the commodore, as the trinket shook in his grasp. "See here, child! I know this locket well! See here! see here!"

Touching a secret spring, the locket flew open, disclosing a secret compartment in which a picture, all faded and worn from the action of sea-water and otherwise, but still enough like the commodore to have readily passed for his present picture.

. "You see all!" he cried. "That was my own picture! And this is a locket—the very same locket—which, fifteen years ago, in New Orleans, I attached to the neck of my little niece Eva, the very week before she vanished so mysteriously and was supposed to have been drowned in the river."

"Your little niece?" questioned Elgie, as she turned her large eyes wonderingly upon the commodore.

In an instant his arms were around her, and she was drawn in a close embrace to his bosom.

"And I can swear that you are that same little girl," he declared. "You are the very image of your mother. You are my niece, my bright little darling, and won't it be the happiest hour of my life when I can place you in the arms of your mother!"

The girl did not for one moment vex herself with doubts in the premises. In her romantic way, she had long looked forward to some such development of the mystery of her life, and she now accepted the commodore's views of the matter, returning his caresses and accepting at once the place he had so promptly assigned her.

But even in the gladness of that moment she did not forget the business which had brought her to the frigate.

"We must go at once for Arty," she said.

"And who is Arty, I say?"

"I will tell you as we go along, sir, to save time."

"Oh, very well, my dear niece," said the commodore, smiling indulgently. "I shall comply with all your wishes of course."

A boat was soon in readiness, and the commodore himself took the post of honor in it, placing the girl immediately in front of him.

"And where to, my young pilot?" he then asked.

Elgie pointed out the precise point of the coast where Arty and Capt. Strong had landed on the preceding evening, and announced that she wished to land there.

"Oh, very well," said the commodore. "How striking! how very remarkable!"

"What, sir?"

"Your resemblance to your mother, child. Won't she be as astonished as delighted to see you! She has long supposed you to have been drowned. Her name, like yours, is Eva—Eva Paulding."

The boat was already flying shoreward rapidly, the commodore having made a gesture to his men while speaking.

"And now tell me, child, all about Arty."

The girl blushed in sweet confusion.

"A word in your ear, Uncle Commodore—if you should really prove to be my uncle."

"Oh, I will take the risk of that," returned the old sea-lion, patting her curly head. "I know you are my brother's lost daughter. But what is the word in question?"

"Simply that I shall marry Arty—since there is no other relation between us."

"Oh, indeed. Then you had better hasten to tell me all about him."

The girl acted upon the hint.

But the boat was still at quite a distance from the shore when a large group of persons was seen advancing from the cover of the neighboring forest.

"Oh, there is Arty now!" cried Elgie. "And Capt. Strong, too. And oh, so many people!"

"Then your fears for them are all groundless?"

"It seems so, sir. But there is a lady with Arty, and there is another lady close behind him—"

"Yes, that second lady, my child, is a Miss Ida Runnel, who has just come in my ship from the West Indies. Did you not see her go ashore just before you came alongside?"

"Yes, I did, sir. But who is that with her?"

"That young man upon whose arm she is leaning," said the commodore, "is Lieutenant Walter Trumbull, a young friend of mine, whom I have recommended for promotion, but who has already recommended himself so well to the young lady that I believe they are engaged to be married!"

The boat had now reached the beach, with many wavings of joyous signals. Before Elgie could get ashore, Arty came rushing to meet her, with his countenance aflame with joy.

"Oh, Elgie!" he shouted, "I have found my mother, and you are not my sister at all, but this young lady is." And he indicated Ida Runnel.

All the necessary explanations were soon given and taken. It turned out that Arty and Mrs. Hillston had encountered Captain Strong and his party, and that all of them had been concealed near the spring in the forest at the instant when Runnel was making his jubilant revelations to Ida. It also turned out that Walter Trumbull had been stunned, not killed, on the occasion of the murderous assault upon him, the knife of the assassin having encountered the buckle in his belt. It further appeared that Captain Strong and his party had fired the volley which killed Runnel and his associate, at the close of the villainous revelations. And it now only remains for me to say that the union of two happy couples, who afterward enlivened the Decatur, and ushered them upon a career of happiness which not merely endures to this day, but is daily becoming grander and brighter. All who be a way to had a

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